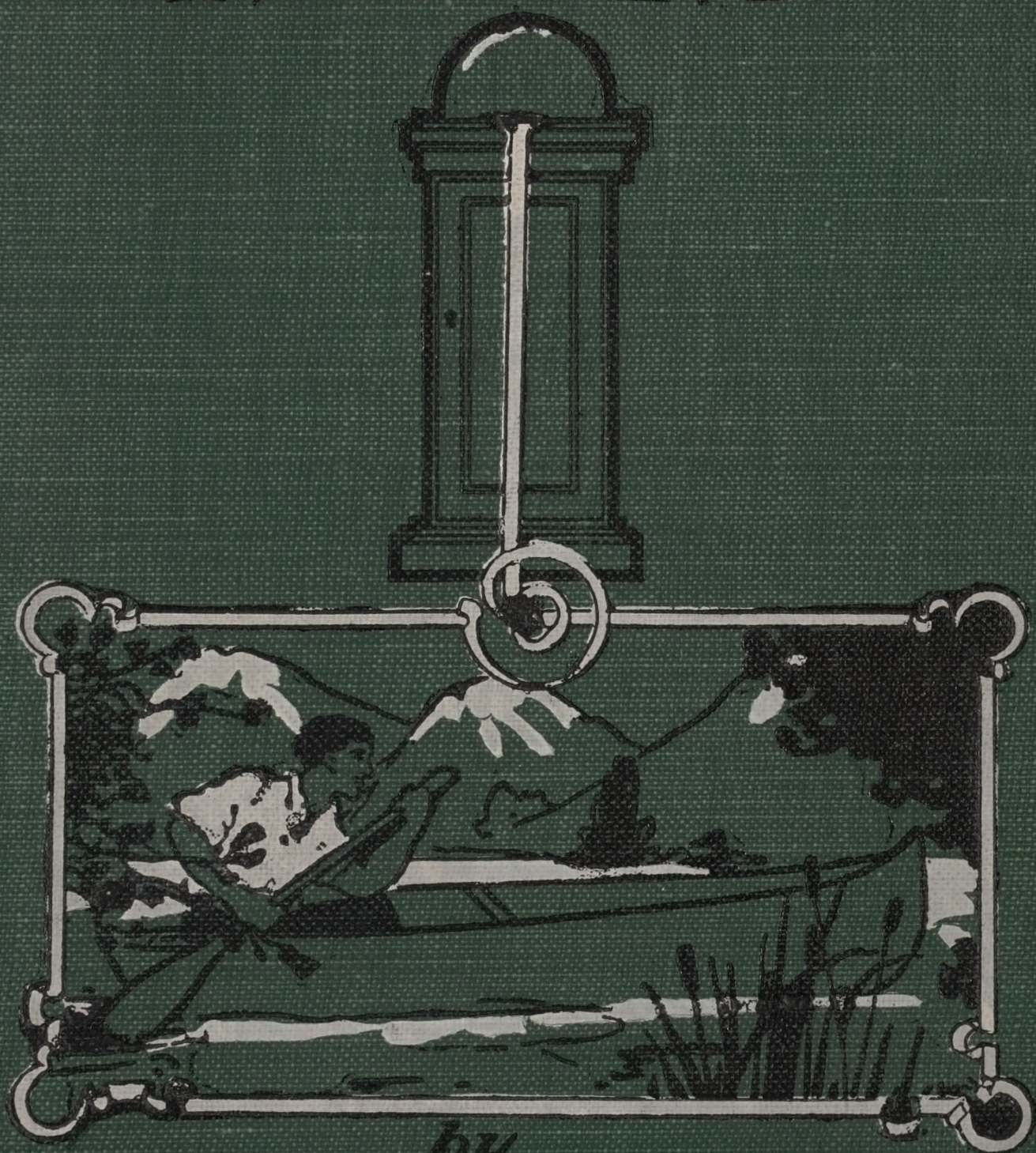


The KING of NOBODY'S ISLAND



by
THOMAS ENRIGHT.



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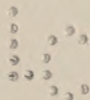
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THE KING OF NOBODY'S ISLAND

BY

THOMAS ENRIGHT



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THE KING OF NOBODY'S ISLAND

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CHAPTER I.

THE MILLIONAIRE.

John Douglass stood in the doorway of the Chicago Board of Trade, deep in reflection. The tumult which had surged and swelled in that Temple of Mammon through the day had died away; the place was deserted now, save for a few laborers and a little army of clerks, or perhaps here and there a white-faced man sitting alone at his desk wondering how he could face the future.

For Douglass the day had been a gratifying one. He had just completed a most satisfactory campaign in wheat; he had "cleaned up,"—bought in the last bushel of his short line, and what had been paper profits before, were now secure and tangible.

A million dollars—that had been his mark, and he had reached it. He had been a gambler all his life, with alternating periods of success and failure; but failure had never made a coward of him, and he returned to every new battle bolder than before, realizing shrewdly that caution is a thing for a gambler to exercise only when he is a winner.

Douglass had always told himself that a million was enough, that when he reached that golden goal he would leave business, with all its perplexities and cares, behind him. He smiled now at the fervor of that vow. He knew that there was nothing else in the world for him but business, and no business but speculation. Well he knew the hazards of the game, knew that he possessed ample means to gratify all his tastes and desires, knew that his fortune might be swept away again; but realizing all this clearly he knew that to-morrow,—the day after, he would again enter the lists.

He was no money lover, this thin, pale-faced man of the world; he valued money for what it would buy; he wanted enough to gratify his expensive tastes; but beyond all, he wanted *the game*. He wanted money for the sake of making it. He played wheat as he played whist, boldly, intelligently, and he loved to win.

The man realized as he stood there that he was not at all the ideal millionaire: he owned no real estate, he had no large business interests; everything he had was money, or bonds and shares which he could convert into cash on an hour's notice. He kept no stable, no mansion, and only one servant; he did not care for any of those things. He lived alone, to take his pleasures where he might find

them, and they were becoming more and more difficult to find. Even now he was wondering what lethe he could find tonight, all the old dissipations had grown stale. With a diffident nature, always mistaken for an arrogant one, he craved companionship, yet made few friends. In speech and action he was calm, almost cold—(an exterior which all gamesters possess)—though he burned always with an unquenchable fire of nervousness; but the fire was banked—always banked. He drank deeply, and was one of those dangerous drunkards who are never noticeably drunk. He lived on excitement and whiskey, yet no man had ever seen him excited or drunk.

He revolved in his mind the possibilities of the evening; if he went to the club some man he did not like would talk to him on a subject he cared nothing about, or Buller would want to sell him real estate which he did not want to buy. The theatre had long ago been placed among the impossibilities, and as for a social call—that was as bad as the theatre, too much that was uninteresting, and too much time between drinks. Women did not enter into his calculations; he knew that he was no favorite with the sex; his money and liberality would buy favors of course, but the thought that he himself was of no consequence had long ago sickened him of these liaisons.

There was nothing for it but to wander about from one old haunt to another, chat with an acquaintance here and there—and drink. Perhaps an inspiration would come.

He crossed the street leisurely, and entering a handsome barroom seated himself in one of the little upholstered recesses that lined the side of the room. An attendant brought a decanter and a glass without an order—Douglass always drank the same thing, straight whiskey.

As he drank, he looked about the room and nodded to one or two men—no one there with whom he cared to hob-nob. There was Howard with his side-whiskers and his insufferable English accent, and Porter, who talked horse forever, and Beardsley, who had read Burns to the exclusion of all other poets, and who would quote “Holy Willie’s Prayer” at the sixth glass, and “Tam O’Shanter” at the tenth, pausing between verses to explain the meaning of the lines; and Morton, who had made two millions in stocks, and who talked not at all, and Cramer, who was always going broke and always giving other people advice.

No one worth while but Morton, and that individual sat, fat and phlegmatic, with a goblet half full of brandy before him, making wet rings on the table with the bottom of his glass and never looking up from his absorbing task.

Cramer rose at last and walked toward Douglass.

"Hello, Douglass," he said, "what's the good word?"

Douglass greeted him politely; he was never rude to any one, but he groaned inwardly.

"Nothing new," he answered; "will you have a drink?"

Cramer seated himself and Douglass rang for another glass.

"How do you feel on wheat now," Cramer asked.

"I'm out of the market, cleaned up today. I don't know what to think; it's about low enough, but I wouldn't want to buy it."

"I tell you it's going a good deal lower," Cramer said; "it'll go to fifty cents."

"Why, I thought you were bullish."

"So I was; I bought the stuff from ninety-five down, but I've switched. I'm a bear now. You must have made a lot of money on this break."

"Yes, I did."

"Well, let me tell you, old man, you hang on to it. If I ever get what you've got they'll never get it away from me."

Douglass was angry, but made no reply. This man belonged to the class who can always tell a man what to do, but cannot accomplish anything themselves. It irritated

Douglass that he should assume that he did not know how to take care of himself.

"If you ever let them get it away from you," Cramer pursued, "well, you ought to lose it."

"Where would you stop if you were to make a lot of money," Douglass asked.

"Um—well, give me a hundred thousand, and no one will ever get *me*."

"You're talking nonsense, no man ever stops; when he gets a hundred thousand he wants a million, and so on forever; you had a hundred thousand twice, and you didn't stop."

"I know, but I will the next time."

"No you won't; it simply looks big to you from the present point of view. When I started trading with next door to nothing, I said that when I made twenty thousand I would quit; I made it and lost it trying to make fifty thousand. I got another start and made fifty thousand, and lost it trying to make it an even hundred. Now I've got a million and I might lose that. Of course, I don't think so, but I might."

Morton, glancing up from his geometrical studies, caught Douglass' eye and nodded. Then he rose heavily and crossed to him. He looked at Cramer coldly and gave him a barely perceptible recognition.

"Douglass," he said, "want to speak with you a minute before you go."

Cramer rose hastily and bade them good-night, and Morton wedged himself, ponderously, into the vacant seat.

"You got out of your wheat today," he said inquiringly.

"Yes, I'm out of the market."

"Well, you're wise, it's anybody's market now."

"I suppose you got out, too; I saw your men buying."

"Yes, I didn't have much of a line. I do better in stocks. I'm going in on a deal with Bruce next week; it's a big thing, and about as near a cinch as anything speculative can be."

Douglass pricked up his ears; Bruce was a great manipulator in New York. What was Morton leading up to? Something certainly; he never multiplied words needlessly.

The big man mused for a moment, making the interminable rings on the wet table with the foot of his glass, then he said slowly:

"Tell you what I'll do, Douglass, I'll put you in on this if you like. We want another man; we are going to form a pool of two and a half million dollars, four of us, Bruce, Green, Hadley and myself. We are going to let Bruce work the thing in a certain stock."

Douglass said nothing; he did not ask what stock. He knew little of Wall Street, but he understood the ethics of the game.

"It's not exactly a blind pool," Morton continued. "We each agree to take up a lot of the certificates to create a scarcity; we hold those shares with the understanding that no one sells until the word is given, so we all get an equal chance. The cash shares will absorb half the pool money, and Bruce operates on margin with the balance."

The two men sat silent for a time. Douglass was flattered. He had always been alone before, and this was the first time he had been considered by one of the big men. At length he said:

"I'll consider the matter, and give you an answer tomorrow."

"All right. Of course, I can't enter into details now, but you know who the men in the pool are, and who Bruce is."

"Yes. I'll call at your office at three o'clock tomorrow."

"Very well, good-night," and extricating himself with difficulty from the space between the table and the seat, Morton walked away, leaving the little table covered with an elaborate net-work of wet rings.

For a few minutes Douglass sat thinking of the interview, then he rose and left the barroom.

He walked slowly north on La Salle Street and entered the Stock Exchange. In the cor-

ridor a tall, clear-eyed man of about forty-five accosted him:

"Hello, Doug, looking for me?"

"Hello, Billy Matthews; no, thank heaven; you lawyers are always smelling trouble. I'm glad to see you, though, Billy, it's been an age."

"Not my fault, come over to the house this evening."

"Not tonight, Billy, I'm tired; I don't feel very chipper lately."

"You don't look well." The lawyer's eyes were shrewdly taking in the thin face, the listless droop of the shoulders, and the blue rings about the eyes. "You need rest, Doug, need it bad."

"Do you know, Billy, as much as I love you, I always feel a bitter resentment toward you when I meet you—you always criticize me."

Matthews looked surprised.

"I don't mean in words," Douglass continued, "but I can feel it. You don't deny it."

"It isn't criticism; I can't see an old friend wearing himself out without thinking about it. This speculation and late hours—"

"And whiskey," Douglass added dryly; "don't forget the whiskey."

"Yes, that's bad, too—it's burning the candle at both ends, and there's nothing in it."

Douglass smiled, "Many men of many minds," he said.

"No, we're all pretty much alike; I lived on my nerves for years just as you are doing now—they were bad years, lost years."

"And then you quit drinking, and you went out into the woods and fished and hunted and made pictures and found new things under the sun and realized that there were lots of things in the world bigger than a ten-dollar bill," quoted Douglass, smilingly.

Matthews laughed. "You've got it down pat, but you try it once; get away from business, go into the woods, rest a month, two months; then come back and laugh at me if you like."

"Why, Billy, I'd die in a week; I'd go crazy in two days. If I'm left without some kind of occupation for an hour I'm unhappy; that wouldn't do for me."

"Try it sometime; it isn't lonesome in the woods and hills; a city is the most lonesome spot on earth, sometimes."

Douglass smiled as Matthews walked away. "Dear old boy, but visionary as the devil," he said to himself.

At the entrance Matthews turned and looked back as his friend walked slowly along the corridor and turned into the bar.

"A good brain and a good heart," he mused, "too bad, too bad; but he'll find himself some day—if he lives."

CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE DEAL.

Douglass awoke the next morning, heavy-eyed and sick; twice he sat up on the side of the bed, only to lie down again and try to sleep, but the active brain would not rest, and with a final determined effort he arose and walked at once to a small buffet that stood in the room. He cursed softly when he found the decanter empty; he remembered now that he had finished its contents the night before. All other entertainment failing him, he had come home early with a new book, and seating himself, with the decanter on the table beside him, had read and drank until the page blurred before him, and the decanter was empty.

There is no time when a man who lives on liquor wants his drink so badly as when he first rises. Douglass rang his bell sharply, and almost before its echo had died away, rang it again. His servant appeared with the bottle ready in his hand—he knew how to interpret the bell. Feverishly, Douglass poured a full glass of the whiskey and drank it quickly, then another. He was sick, sick—scarcely able to

stand—but he had been sick for years. He knew the disease and the cure. He walked about the room for a few moments. Slowly the color stole into his cheeks, his hands ceased trembling, and the awful feeling of sinking and depression left him. Then he took a third drink, a smaller one, and entered his bath.

He dressed himself with the scrupulous care for which he was noted, and when he left his apartments he was as much himself as a man who lives on stimulants ever is. Downstairs he entered the café, and seating himself at a table, opened his newspaper. Breakfast, with him, was a mere concession to old habits and conventions. Sometimes he ate a few bites, usually nothing at all. On this particular morning he nibbled a bit of toast, sipped a little coffee, and then rose and walked into the street.

He looked at his watch—ten o'clock. What in the world should he do until three, the hour of his appointment with Morton? He had a little business with his brokers and at the bank—that would occupy him for an hour; what then? He walked down State Street and gazed without interest into the windows; he smiled as he recalled that years ago he had often stood before these windows and dreamed of what he would buy if he could afford it. Now he wished there was something that he

could wish to buy. But no, his million reposed in the bank, lifeless, impotent dollars, mere counters in the great game of beggar my neighbor.

At Madison Street he paused to listen to an altercation between a blustering policeman and a frightened Italian boy who was vending plaster casts.

"If I ever catch ye on this street again I'll break every one of them imidges," the policeman said, and the boy murmured something in a scared, dazed way, but did not offer to move.

The policeman raised his club menacingly.

"You break one of those things and you'll be off this beat tomorrow," Douglass said in his crisp, incisive way; "don't you see that the boy don't understand?"

The policeman turned red with rage. "And who are ye?" he said.

"Never mind who I am—let the boy alone; he's a stranger in a strange land; he's got a living to make and he's trying to make it."

"I'm half a mind to take ye in yerself."

"All right, go ahead."

The officer glared at him, thought better of it, and moved away.

Douglass felt in his pocket and brought out a bill, ten dollars; he handed it to the boy and was gratified at the look of amazed, concen-

trated joy on his face. Tears came into the big, dark eyes; then followed a burst of voluble Italian. Douglass moved hurriedly away; he abominated emotion.

At noon he visited his brokers and his banker, and after some brief transactions, started his aimless wandering again. He chatted with a few acquaintances, watched the ticker for a few minutes, gave a boy a dollar for feeding a great, gaunt mastiff that was sniffing pathetically at a butcher's cart, and then went back to the ticker.

But even the ticker has little interest for the man who is out of the market, and the time dragged heavily.

At last three o'clock came and he walked toward Morton's office. He had decided to enter the pool. He had thought the matter over and understood it now about as well as he expected to after the details were laid before him. He did not know what stock was to be manipulated, he did not care—he wanted to be doing something, and he wanted to be one of the insiders. As to the prospects of success, he knew that Bruce was a shrewd manipulator, and that Morton always had the best of a deal before he entered it. At any rate he felt unbounded confidence in his own ability to take care of himself. He had no feeling that placing half his fortune on the ven-

ture was a very important matter ; he was used to taking chances.

The big man was seated at the desk in his private office. The floor around him was littered with bits of matches ; he was nervous, but in such a phlegmatic way that no one noticed it. He looked down after he greeted Douglass and went on breaking matches into bits with his fat, powerful fingers.

After a few brief commonplaces Douglass took a check from his pocket and laid it on the desk.

"I'm coming in with you," he said.

Morton took the check and looked at it in his dull, heavy way, turned it over and looked at the back, started to fold it, but thought better of it and laid it down again.

"You understand, Douglass, I'm vouching for you in this matter. We have to exercise great care in such a deal. It's of necessity a gentleman's agreement ; our success depends on good faith all around."

Douglass made no reply ; he did not propose to cheapen himself by any assertions as to his own integrity.

After a few more matches had been broken, Morton went on :

"I've followed you pretty close, closer than you know, and I think you're going to make a good addition to our ranks. Here are the de-

tails, look them over; if you want to withdraw after you have read them, we'll tear up the check and I'll take your word for it that you won't let it leak."

Douglass was pleased at this evidence of confidence; he did not know that Morton, dull and prosy as he appeared, was a past master in the art of flattery. Nor did he know that the big man felt sure that there was no remote chance of his withdrawing now.

He read the closely written pages, penned in Bruce's own cramped hand for surer secrecy.

Briefly, the plan was this: The National Rope Company, a little trust with only ten millions of capital stock, had, a year ago, listed its shares in Wall Street. These shares had been speculative footballs, with many ups and downs. As the stock paid dividends, a great deal of it was held by small investors. The present price was low, about fifty dollars a share. Bruce explained that he would buy outright about thirty-five or forty thousand shares, which would exhaust the floating supply of stock, or at least create a scarcity of Street certificates. These shares he would divide among the members of the pool, pro-rata, with the understanding that they were to be locked up and kept out of the Street until the word was given to sell, then all would fare alike, as each man would have an equal

opportunity to dispose of his shares in the open market. Meanwhile the manipulator would "milk the market," bidding the price up to high figures and reaping profits on the way up. A million and a quarter would pay for the floating shares, the other million and a quarter would be the manipulator's working capital. He would first accumulate a big line carefully, and then good reports of the business of the National Rope Company would begin to fill the financial columns of the daily press; perhaps an extra dividend would be paid; he could arrange all that.

Douglass read the letter carefully and understandingly. It was simple enough and pretty certain. He passed it back to Morton.

"It's all satisfactory," he said briefly; "I'm in."

Morton folded the check and put it in his pocket-book. A half-million-dollar deal in Wall Street does not involve so much detail as in other lines of business.

"I'll keep you posted," he said.

"How high does he intend to put it?" asked Douglass.

"High as he can; I don't know, he probably don't know himself. He'll break the price first to get his stock cheap and create a short interest."

"Of course; what's the stock really worth?"

Morton reflected, tearing a sheet of paper into little fragments—the matches had given out.

“Well,” he said at length, “to tell the truth, it aint worth a damn. They’ll be assessed inside of a year, but that don’t make much difference.”

“No, I suppose not.”

The little deal having been arranged, they went together to the barroom where they had met the night before and ratified the alliance with a drink or two. Then they separated and went each his listless way.

In his rooms that night Douglass sat down again to his bottle and his book. He told himself that merely following the movements of National Rope was likely to prove a trifle tame; he would have liked it better if he had had an active part in the work. But the deal was made, no use objecting now to its conditions. So he strove to dismiss the matter from his mind, and turned again to his story.

But he could not read tonight with the keen appreciation and quick understanding which ill-health and excesses had failed to conquer. A project was forming in his mind; as it took shape, he let his thoughts wander from his book until he realized with a smile that he had read a dozen pages with no knowledge of

what they contained. Then he laid the volume aside and began pacing the floor.

"Of course," he said to himself, "why not get in the game. I'll keep my promises, but I'll start a little Rope deal of my own and make a killing."

CHAPTER III.

DOG EAT DOG.

Although he was under no injunction as to speculating in National Rope for his own account, Douglass knew enough about the machinery of the Street to realize that his own operations, if large, would interfere with Bruce's campaign. So he decided to go slow and keep his own counsel.

His plan was simple enough: he would watch for the preliminary break and buy a line of National Rope on margin. Bruce was to report daily to Morton what he had done, and by following these advices he would try to deduce what would probably be done next. On this plan he would himself buy and sell under cover of his broker's name, and the transactions could not so easily be traced to their actual source. Meanwhile he watched the ticker and waited.

He did not have long to wait; a few days after the formation of the pool, a statement appeared in all the daily papers that the National Rope Trust was to have a powerful competitor, and that their business would probably be cut in two. Still later it was

hinted that the next quarterly statement of the corporation would make a bad showing. The news also went abroad that Bruce was a bear on the shares and was selling heavily. Under these influences, and the savage, well-timed attacks on the stock by the manipulator, the price fell rapidly to fifty, then to forty-five, and a week later was quoted at forty.

At this latter price Douglass bought five thousand shares; he shrewdly surmised that Bruce would not go too far, he would not want to frighten too many actual holders out and bring a fresh supply of floating stock into the market. Speculators were already talking pessimistically about the future of National Rope, and this was just what Bruce wanted, a short interest which he could squeeze. Douglass realized that the desired pessimistic sentiment had been created.

The price remained around forty for a day or two, then broke sharply to thirty-eight and immediately began going up. That day the closing price was forty-two. Two days later Morton delivered to Douglass certificates for six thousand shares of the stock. They were what is known as Street certificates; that is, they were signed in blank by the original purchaser in such a way as to make them the property of the holder. Douglass took the stock to his deposit vault and locked it up.

The next day he bought five thousand more National Rope on margin. He was positive now that the deal was on; he could only theorize before, for in his daily reports Bruce confined himself to statements of what he *had* done; he never told what he *intended* doing.

Slowly the price of National Rope advanced; all the reports of formidable competition and poor business were authoritatively denied; the president of the company personally stated that business had never been so good, and that it was highly probable that the dividend rate would be raised at the next directors' meeting. The same people who had been predicting that the stock would sell at ten dollars a share a few weeks before, were now talking one hundred.

When the price reached fifty-two, Douglass sold his ten thousand shares, having realized a profit of over a hundred thousand dollars. He sold on the theory that Bruce would probably take profits soon. But the price kept on advancing until sixty was reached.

Douglass was dissatisfied; he told himself that he had played the game like an amateur. He might have known that Bruce was not out for ten or twenty points, and besides, he had gone in too cautiously. He should have bought twice as much as he did. He was satisfied now that there was to be a further ad-

vance, so he re-purchased his ten thousand shares and an additional ten thousand. In another week seventy was reached; then came a break to sixty-five. The next day Bruce reported that he had sold out with a quarter of a million profit to the pool. He explained that he had attracted too many short-margined followers, and had "shaken them out" to clear the atmosphere.

Douglass studied the matter carefully; it was certain that the game was not over. Bruce had said nothing about a division of the profits, nor had he given the word to sell the cash holdings. There was to be a still further advance.

Convinced of this, Douglass doubled his line; he now had forty thousand shares. Every "point" up or down meant forty-thousand dollars now, and in addition to his speculative line he held six thousand shares in certificates—he was *in* with a vengeance. The price advanced to seventy and again dropped to sixty-five. Douglass began to get a little nervous; he knew he was overdoing it, and decided to reduce his line on the next upturn.

At ten o'clock one morning he went to Morton's office; the big man was not there,—his clerk stated that he had gone out for a moment and Douglass entered his private office and sat down to await his return. He noticed a

telegraph blank lying on the floor, and reaching to pick it up and lay it on the desk, his eye caught the signature "Bruce." He read the message quickly and rose and left the room. He went straight to his brokers and gave an order to sell his National Rope. He was perplexed: the telegram to Morton read, "You have been selling out your certificates; unless you assure me that your line is intact by buying six thousand shares at once, will declare pool disbanded and sell everything."

Douglass felt sure that Morton had gone out to follow this dictum to buy the six thousand shares, but if he had not, and Bruce kept his word, there would be a crash. He was not greatly worried, for he felt that his stock would be disposed of around the average buying price at least. He stood for a few moments watching the ticker; National Rope was coming out in small lots at sixty-five. Then he determined to find out what Morton had done, and went quickly across the street and called for a clerk in the office of Morton's broker.

"Hill," he said, "I want you to meet me in the Rathskeller, in the third wine room from the door, right away."

"All right," was the response, and Douglass made his way quickly to the appointed meeting place.

He had hardly seated himself before Hill appeared. The clerk was a shrewd-looking, sharp-eyed youth. Douglass did not waste any words; he took a hundred-dollar bill from his vest pocket and shoved it across the table. He had done business with the boy before.

"Hill," he said tersely, "I want you to go right back to the office and find out what orders Morton gave this morning, and 'phone me here at once."

The clerk took the bill, folded it and placed it in his pocket coolly.

"I don't need to 'phone you," he said; "I took Morton's order myself. He has been in the office only once this morning, and he gave an order to buy six thousand Rope."

"All right; that's all. You'd better go first. What was Rope when you left?"

"Sixty-four and a half."

"Thanks."

After the young man left the room Douglass sat for a few minutes revolving in his nimble brain the events of the morning, and trying to decide what would happen. The thing looked all right on the face of it; Morton had tried to slip out of his certificates quietly, and Bruce had in some way discovered it and issued a prompt and practical edict. So far, so good; but Douglass didn't like this kind of thing,—a fight among the members of the pool. He was

oppressed with a sense of impending disaster.

He rose and made his way quickly to his office. He drew the tape through his fingers and started with surprise: Rope was forty-six. The stock was pouring out in big blocks, and the ticker was dancing madly. He watched it for a moment: forty-five and a half, forty-five, a thousand shares at forty-four and three-quarters. A boy ran in with a telegram. Douglass tore it open hurriedly: "Pool disbanded, bad faith among the members. Am selling holdings, sell your certificates.—Bruce."

Reaching to the telephone, Douglass rang up his brokers quickly: "Sell six thousand shares Rope at the market; I'll bring you the certificates in a few minutes. What did you get for my forty thousand?"

"All kinds of prices, everybody trying to sell at once. It will average you about fifty-one. Just finished selling."

Douglass walked to the bank deliberately. There was no need to hurry now. He estimated his losses as he walked along,—at least half a million. He had been badly beaten, and it was a bitter pill to swallow. He decided that he would say nothing until he heard what Bruce had to say.

He took the certificates from his box and carried them to his broker. That individual received them joyfully; he believed Douglass

to be good for anything he did, but in the speculative arena no one is ever sure of a man's solvency.

"What did you get for these?" Douglass asked.

The broker laid a slip with a list of prices before him, "All the way from forty-two to thirty-five."

Douglass made some brief computations on the slip: "All right," he said, "that will leave me a balance with you, I'll call for it tomorrow."

He crossed the street to the barroom where the National Rope deal had been formulated. Morton was sitting in one of the recesses making rings on the table; he beckoned to Douglass.

"This turns out badly," he said; "we will lose about a hundred thousand apiece, I guess. The last report Bruce made shows that he had a big line long.

"He accuses some one of bad faith."

"Yes, so he says," Morton said, always looking down at his fret-work. "Sorry I got you into this. You can stand it, I guess. It's the fortunes of war."

Douglass made a brief reply and moved away. He did not care to tell Morton that he had read his message; neither did he care to speak of his independent operations. He would wait.

The next morning he received a statement and a check from Bruce; a brief letter accompanied the documents stating that he had thought best to disband the pool and sell its holdings. There had been a very savage raid on National Rope, and he had found it unsafe to proceed further, so had sold the pool's holdings in the open market as per statement inclosed. Nothing about Morton.

The statement was a long one, covering several sheets of paper. It showed that the pool had suffered a net loss of something over half a million dollars. Douglass' personal share of this was therefore about one hundred thousand. In the cash certificates he had lost very little, but his independent transactions had cost him four hundred thousand dollars,—half a million gone in less than a month.

He was not a man to spend either time or words in useless protest. After his first bad quarter of an hour he had taken the matter philosophically. But neither was he a man to slight the details of the affair. He wanted to understand it.

He went to his office and examined the statement carefully. Bruce had not begun selling until the price had reached fifty. Then he laid the statement aside and lighted a cigar, leaned back in his chair, put his feet on the table, and for two hours did not move except to light one

cigar at the butt of another. Then he rose and called for the official tape of the day before. The tape is the long white ribbon on which the ticker prints the record of every transaction made on the Stock Exchange, the number of shares, the price, and the time of day. He drew the ribbon carefully through his fingers, a little at a time, and made memoranda of the dealings in National Rope until he had covered the transactions of the entire day. He folded the sheets which he had covered with figures, and put them in his pocket. Then he lay back in his chair and smoked three more cigars.

"Crooked," he muttered at last; "crooked as a grape vine. I don't suppose I can make the old fox disgorge, but I can go to New York and let him know that I'm on to his little game, and I will go."

* * * * *

Two days later Douglass was in New York. He went at once to Bruce's Wall Street office, and sent his card in to that worthy. After a long delay he was ushered into the private office. The only occupant of the room was a short, heavy man sitting at a huge desk writing. He did not look up as Douglass entered, but went on with his work. Douglass seated himself near the desk and scrutinized the man closely, undisturbed by his lack of courtesy.

He noted that his features were stern and forbidding, and that he had a most remarkably ugly mouth; it was simply a straight slit,—no sign of lips, no curve. Douglass remembered that he had once seen a Western gambler with a mouth like this, and had heard that he would kill a man and consider it all in the day's work.

His writing concluded, Bruce turned slowly in his chair and fixed his cold, gray eyes on Douglass. Not a sign of an expression appeared on his heavy face.

"Well," he said.

Douglass knew that here was a man to overawe people, to make them ill at ease by his brevity of speech and glowering harshness. But he was neither overawed nor ill at ease. He returned the look in kind, and said:

"I want to understand more about this National Rope deal."

"You had my letter and statement!"

"I did, and I saw your telegram to Morton also. You ordered him to buy six thousand shares of Rope. He bought it at sixty-five."

"Well?"

"You sold him yours."

A shade of surprise crossed the manipulator's face,—it was enough, Douglass knew that he was right.

"Well, suppose I did? He broke faith, and deserved what he got."

“That part of it is all right; it was a clever trick, but look here.” Douglass drew the sheets of figures he had compiled from the tape out of his pocket and threw them on the desk. “Morton bought his six thousand at sixty-five; there were sixty thousand shares of Rope sold between that price and fifty. You didn’t begin selling for the pool until fifty was reached. I want to know who sold that sixty thousand shares between sixty-five and fifty.”

“You sold part of it,” Bruce answered composedly.

“Yes, I sold less than ten thousand shares of it below fifty; who sold the other fifty thousand?”

“I don’t know.”

Douglass laughed an ugly little laugh. “I do; there was no big interest in Rope except your pool. You sold that stuff short, or a good part of it, and broke the price on your own associates. I could prove it, I suppose, if I went at it carefully, but I don’t need to,—I know it.”

“You are at liberty to prove anything you can. There was bad faith all around; I was shrewd enough to take the numbers of all the certificates I delivered, and three of the members were peddling out on me. It was a game of dog eat dog,—I took care of myself. The bulk of your personal loss was sustained on

your independent transactions, I was under no obligation to help you there; I knew what you were doing all the time."

"I'm not making any protest about my personal losses, I've been in this game for twenty years, and no one ever heard me whimper. I lived up to my agreement with you, and you cold-decked me. I came here to let you know that I understood."

A slow flush came upon Bruce's face. He turned to his desk and pushed a button, then resumed his writing.

Douglass rose and walked close up to him. "I'm going," he said. "I suppose you're accustomed to having the people you cheat come here and fall into a panic when you glare at them. That kind of play-acting won't work with me. I'm going to wait my time, and some day I'll play dog eat dog with you again."

On the train that night Douglass reflected with grim satisfaction on his interview. He knew that what he had said about the play-acting was true, and that nothing makes that sort of an actor so angry as to have his art discovered.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOCKER.

When he reached Chicago, Douglass went at once to his apartments. The events of the week had been very trying, and despite his unruffled demeanor, the strain had told on mind and body. To be naturally cool and composed is one thing, and to repress all visible signs of agitation by sheer force of will is another,—the latter process increases the real tension. But he had been banking those internal fires all his life, and a burst of anger, or loud words were unknown things to him.

He had been drinking even more heavily than usual for three or four days, but now, for some reason, his whiskey did not taste right,—it nauseated him. He sat down in his great leather arm-chair and tried to compose himself to read, but a feeling of depression and nervousness harassed him, and at intervals he rose and paced the floor. Once, sitting in the chair, he fell into a sort of stupor, and sprang up affrightedly at the sound of some one speaking his name shrilly almost in his ear. There was no one there. He took a drink and sat down again. Once more he fell into the stupor

and awoke with a sharp jar, as if some force had lifted his chair and dropped it. He rose and walked to the buffet, but his legs trembled under him, and he staggered as he walked. He steadied himself against the wall, and attempted to pour a drink, but the decanter dropped from his trembling hand with a crash. He felt his legs giving way beneath him, but by a great effort he managed to reach the electric button, pressed it, and fell heavily to the floor.

* * * * *

When he recovered consciousness, after many hours, old Doctor Graves, who had been his friend and physician for many years, was seated beside the bed.

"What was it?" Douglass asked. "What's the matter with me?"

"Over-stimulation. I got here just in time to keep your heart beating."

"How long are you going to keep me in bed?"

"You can get up now if you want to; you're safe enough for the time being."

The old doctor took a turn or two across the room, then came and seated himself on the bed.

"Jack," he said, "you're in a bad way; you've been drunk for four years."

The old doctor's solemn face and the words he uttered struck Douglass as being funny. He laughed and said:

"That ought to be a record."

But Doctor Graves did not smile: "You are on the verge of nervous prostration," he said. "You can't keep it off long unless you change your whole method of life. You will either die or go crazy; you have been living on alcohol and forcing your brain to do its normal work with no body back of it. Did you ever have one of these sinking spells before?"

"No."

"It is the beginning of the end. Nature's bills are coming due, and you can't meet them."

Douglass lay quiet, staring at the ceiling. He knew that this man was telling him the truth. He was a friend as well as a physician, and above all, a wise, tolerant, progressive man.

"What must I do," Douglass said at last.

"Will you put yourself entirely in my hands, Jack?"

For a time the sick man made no reply. He knew what that meant: no more business, no more whiskey probably. After all, what was the use of living, divorced from everything in life? He decided on a compromise.

"For how long?" he asked.

"Six months."

Again he stared at the ceiling for a time, and then said:

"All right, what must I do?"

"First of all, give up business affairs of every kind, and go away to some quiet place in the woods or mountains. Not to a fashionable resort, mind you, but to some place where you will have to rough it. I want your mind to rest and your body to work."

"When shall I start?"

"This is the twenty-fifth of April; start the first of May."

"Very well. I'll go and see Billy Matthews; he knows where all the God-forsaken places are. I think I'll go crazy sure enough in one of them, but it's a bargain."

"Wait and see; perhaps health and strength will develop new interests in life for you."

Another pause, then Douglass said slowly: "Must I give up the whiskey?"

"I'm not going to place any injunctions on you; the cure lies with the individual. The desire for drink is, in its first stages, nervousness, then it becomes a necessity. Get your mind and body normal and you won't want whiskey."

"I'm not quoting from medical books," the doctor continued; "I was a drunkard once,—I've been through the mill. I quit after a

night like this of yours. Then I began to live and to see with a clear brain what had been all in a mist before. I swore off, and when I found myself craving liquor I sat down and asked myself what that craving was: I found out. In the last analysis, drinking is a state of the mind—an hallucination. I conquered liquor with my mind. Let me show you something."

He crossed the room to the little buffet and poured out a glass of whiskey, lifted it to his lips and drank it.

"I have been up with you all night,—I'm tired; that drink will do me good. I do not want another, no normal man ever does. That is the only way we can cure drunkenness,—by killing the desire. The man who swears to abstain is always in danger. What we want is temperance, not abstinence. As long as you're afraid of the stuff, it will keep after you and down you again."

"I don't want to stop off short," Douglass said, "but I'll reduce the rations, and I'll follow your advice. I'm out of the market now, and come to think of it, I couldn't be much more restless than I am right here." Then, with a touch of sadness that seldom came into his voice or showed itself on his face, he continued: "You know I haven't a soul on earth, no family, no folks. Outside of you and Billy

Matthews, I haven't even any friends; I'm a lonesome kind of a beggar. I might as well be on a desert island for all the company this crowded town is to me."

After the doctor had gone Douglass reflected at length on his new project. Once he had made up his mind to it, the thing did not appear so unattractive. As he lay thinking what had befallen him in the last month, a great nausea for all that crowd of heavy, slow-moving, dollar-hunting men came over him. Was it worth while? Maybe Matthews was right; maybe there was something in the world bigger than a ten-dollar bill.

But the gamester's spirit was still uppermost, and a little later he told himself that he would have plenty of time to think and scheme while he was resting, and that when he returned, improved in mind and body, he would be in better condition to play dog eat dog with Bruce.

CHAPTER V.

THE START.

A week later Douglass alighted from a Pullman car at a little station on the state line of Michigan and Wisconsin. The last hours of his ride had been through a country almost uninhabited, nothing but woods and water. Reared in a city, it was almost impossible for him to realize that a night's ride could carry him into a wilderness. At first the car had been filled with fishermen and pleasure-seekers, but one by one they had dropped out, and at "State Line" he was the only passenger.

Physically, he was beginning to feel a little better. He had arranged his business affairs so that they could be left indefinitely, and he had cut down the whiskey and was getting a little appetite for food.

As he stood alone on the little platform, he looked ruefully after the disappearing train,—he was homesick already. Once his mind was made up to leave the city, he had taken some interest in the purchase of his equipment for the trip, and on the train he had listened with pleasure to the stories the passengers told of the woods and lakes, but now he stood there on the platform, solitary and disgusted.

Matthews had notified a guide, a half-breed Indian, to meet him at the station, but he was not in evidence. The baggageman had dumped his trunk on the platform, and Douglass sat down on it and lit a cigar. He was in for it now and might as well make the best of it. He wondered where the guide was, and what he looked like. He had formed a vague mental picture of a man in a blanket, smoking a pipe of peace, and making guttural sounds; his information about Indians was not very comprehensive.

As he sat ruminating dolefully, a young man came walking briskly towards him across a little clearing.

"Mr. Douglass," said he, "I'm a little late. I started in time, but snagged my canoe and had to patch her. My name is George Clark."

Douglass was surprised,—nice kind of an aborigine this, without a blanket or a pipe of peace, and worst of all, a good plain English vocabulary. His black hair, straight, spare form and brown skin were the only touches of the Indian in his makeup.

Quickly Douglass revolved the ethics of the situation in his mind. This man was his servant, and he was accustomed to treat servants rather coolly. But some way the present situation seemed different. His quick intuition

solved the question. He extended his hand and said heartily:

"It's all right, I didn't mind waiting."

The half-breed looked at the trunk: "Guess I'd better take that over to the store, it's only about a hundred rods from here; we can pack what you want and leave it here,—you know we couldn't go far with that trunk."

Douglass didn't know, but he nodded acquiescence. The guide swung the trunk easily to his shoulder and they started along the path that led through the woods to the store.

"Where do you want to go," he asked Douglass as they walked.

"I don't know. Mr. Matthews told me you knew this country like a book—I want to start out a little easy at first."

"How long are you going to stay?"

"I don't know that either." He was going to add, "as long as I can stand it," but changed it to "as long as I like it here."

"I can take you over to Crooked Lake, it's an easy trip, three short portages. We can start in an hour or two and get there by sundown. There's a shack there, and you can lie there for a while and work on into the woods later. Good muscallonge fishing there, and bass a mile away.

"All right, that will suit me first rate." Douglass didn't know exactly what a shack

was, he had no conception of portages, long or short, and he cared nothing about either muscallonge or bass, but as the die was cast, he decided with a true gambler's spirit to go anywhere that this counterfeit Indian suggested. So long as he was to be buried, it made little difference where the grave was.

They arrived at the store, and went inside. It proved to be more saloon than store; one side of the room was filled with shelves containing canned goods and dried meats; some boxes were lying about the floor, and across the other side stretched a rude bar. At a table in the rear of the room two lumbermen in corduroys sat on boxes playing cards with a stocky individual in shirt-sleeves, evidently the proprietor.

They looked up and nodded as the newcomers entered, and went on with their game. The half-breed disappeared into a back room with the trunk, and returning, seated himself in silence on a box. There was an atmosphere of restraint in the room that Douglass did not like. It would have been all right in the city, but not here. He quickly decided that the initiative should be on his part, and after considering a moment said:

"Will you gentlemen have a drink?"

The shirt-sleeved individual rose and planted himself behind the bar, as one who knew what

the answer would be. The two lumbermen and the guide promptly arrayed themselves before the dispenser. All ordered whiskey, and as the glasses were being placed, a genial air of sociability quickly developed. These rough men were not going to push themselves in, but they responded with alacrity to the good-natured advances of the stranger.

The whiskey was quickly disposed of, and instead of resuming their game, they began talking of the region in which they lived. They showed great interest in Douglass and his plans, and gave advice and information freely. The city man realized after a few minutes that he was absorbed in their talk, and that he himself was conversing without restraint or watchfulness. When George called him away in half an hour to help make up the pack, he regretted leaving. There was a freedom, a frankness, and a rough courtesy that he liked.

He threw open his trunk in the little back room, and the guide selected or rejected one article after another as Douglass produced them; the woodsman smiled to himself at some of the contents of the trunk, but showed no surprise. When Douglass produced a compass weighing a pound, it went into the pack. The man saw that Douglass considered it a triumph of forethought and decided not to disappoint him. For himself, he knew how to tell

the North by the face of his watch, by the bark on the trees, and in several other ways.

The pack being completed by the addition of some of the half-breed's own possessions, Douglass arrayed himself in a suit of bright new corduroys, a sweater, and rubber boots. Three-fourths of the impedimenta he had purchased went back into the trunk. He found out later why a pack must be made as light as possible.

He walked out into the bar a little ill at ease in his unaccustomed clothing, but with a new sense of interest in the proceedings. George swung the pack on his back by a strap across his forehead, and gave the word that all was ready. The men shook hands all round with the air of being old friends, wished each other good luck, and the guide trudged out and down the wood road, followed by his employer. Douglass noted with envy and admiration the easy swinging gait of the young half-breed, and wondered how far he would go with that heavy pack before he gave out. He got his answer: George turned to him and said: "Now when you get tired, just sing out and we'll rest a bit," and trudged on. Douglass walked steadily behind him for two hours, and then called a halt. The guide had not stopped once to ease the heavy load.

After a brief rest they resumed the journey; there was very little conversation, the road was both rough and soft, and Douglass needed all his breath to keep up with the tireless, steady gait of his guide.

At noon they left the road and for half an hour followed a trail through the woods. Here, the walking was worse. After tripping a dozen times on roots that grew across the path, Douglass learned to "pick up his feet." The branches struck him in the face, and the perspiration streamed off him, but he kept on uncomplainingly. Then they came suddenly out of the woods and stood upon the shore of a little lake. George dropped the pack and Douglass sat down upon it and mopped his face. The guide looked at him curiously.

"Tired?" he asked.

"Oh, not very," Douglass replied gamely. "I'm a little soft yet."

Without any further comment, George disappeared in the woods. Douglass had no idea where he was going, or what was coming next. He gazed with admiration on the placid little lake. He was very tired, and also rather hungry, and wondered where and when they would get dinner.

George soon reappeared in a canoe. He shoved it up to the bank, jumped out, and held it cautiously as he directed Douglass how to

seat himself. Then he placed the pack in it, seated himself in the stern, and drove the canoe lightly through the water with his single paddle.

The cool breeze fanned Douglass' hot face, the trees murmured gently as they swung in the wind, the clear air filled his lungs, and a sense of rest and peace came over him as the canoe slipped noiselessly across the lake. He began to think that this hobby of Billy Matthews' wasn't so bad after all—he was enjoying it. He reflected with pleasure on the little scene at the store, and felt that he had carried his part of it well. Then he realized with surprise that he had not thought of taking a drink for hours. The novelty and occupation of the day had removed it entirely from his thoughts.

"I believe the old man was right," he said to himself, "it is a state of the mind."

When they arrived at the other side of the lake George said: "I'll have to double the trail; you can come with me the first trip and catch some fish while I'm gone."

"All right," Douglass answered briskly. He didn't know what doubling the trail was and he didn't care,—the ride on the lake had refreshed and cheered him.

The guide swung the canoe upon his head, bottom upward, and plunged into the forest with Douglass bringing up the rear.

The portage was a short one and in ten minutes they arrived on the shores of another little lake. Douglass noted with surprise that the water in this lake was of a green tint, while in the other one it had been perfectly clear. He remarked on this and George said: "These little lakes are land-locked; you'll find three or four different kinds of water in this region. This looks like Lake Superior water."

He put the canoe into the lake and drew a fish-line from his pocket. Then he cut a pole with his knife and tied the line to it. Lastly, he stepped into the water and slopped around for a moment, returning with a handful of small frogs; these he tied up in a piece of cloth, and threw the pole and bait into the canoe.

"You can catch some fish while I'm gone," he said, "and we'll have dinner when I come back,—the wall-eyed pike run here. Take the canoe and row out a ways."

Then he disappeared. Through the trees he called back, "Don't stand up in the canoe."

Douglass was not pleased. He didn't want to catch fish, and he didn't know how to paddle a canoe. He had a vague recollection of going fishing when he was a boy, and remembered that he enjoyed it then, but now it held no attractions for him.

"But I've received my orders," he mused, "I suppose I'll have to obey them."

He waded out at the side of the canoe, feeling every step on the bottom of the lake gingerly; stepping in, he pushed the boat off awkwardly. When he essayed to paddle, the canoe described all sorts of movements. It moved, but never in the right direction. He struggled and perspired, but made no progress. Then he took the paddle out of the water and sat looking at it thoughtfully.

"I see it now, I must guide it and drive it forward at the same time by turning the blade." He tried it again and in a few minutes was getting along better, and he felt gratified at the trifling victory.

Fifty yards from the shore he laid down his paddle and took up the fishing tackle, baited the hook and dropped it into the water. In another minute he was oblivious to everything in the world except that he was struggling with a fish.

"It's a big one," he said aloud; "by George, it must be a whopper."

After a brief struggle he had it in the boat, a four-pound pike with opalescent eyes and golden scales. He had never imagined a fish could be so beautiful. He did not spend much time admiring it, however. The spell was on him and he was eager to repeat the experience. He took the fish from the hook excitedly, some old forgotten dexterity of his boyhood days

assisting him. In the next half hour he landed five more, all smaller than the first one.

"Wish I could get a big one again," he thought, and then smiled at his interest in fishing. Then something happened which was worth while: the end of his pole disappeared with a swish, then it was dragged sidewise so forcibly as to almost wrest it from his grasp; no doubt about the big one this time. For ten minutes he fought and pulled, his heart beating like a trip-hammer and his eyes bulging. Then he saw a great dorsal fin cut the water, a pair of milky eyes glared up at him, and swish, it was gone again.

"Keep the line taut," cried George. He had returned with the pack, and was standing on the bank; "don't let him get away."

"Hey, come out here," Douglass roared. "I believe I've got a shark, or the devil himself."

"Keep the line taut," George repeated. "He'll get away if you let him have a slack line."

"Get away, indeed! not for a million." Again the big eyes looked up beside the boat, again that huge fin cut the water. With a yell, Douglass dropped the pole, stretched out his arms, half rolled, half tumbled out of the canoe, and in an instant stood spluttering in four feet of water with the now thoroughly exhausted fish clasped to his bosom in a rigid em-

brace. And so, he waded triumphantly ashore, leaving the canoe to drift where it would.

The half-breed made a swift observation of the boat and the wind, and then entered into the spirit of the thing.

"That's a big one," he said; "a fifteen-pounder."

"Fifteen pounds! He weighs nearer fifty," Douglass cried, "and I had a fight with him, I tell you."

Then, half-ashamed of his unwonted enthusiasm, he stopped and looked at his dripping garments, then towards the drifting canoe.

"Lord," he said, "I forgot all about the boat."

"It's all right; it will drift ashore while we eat dinner, and we'll have this fellow for our dinner, too."

Then the ludicrous side of the matter struck Douglass, and he burst into a great peal of laughter. He had not laughed like that for years, and the experience was sound and satisfying. He remembered that the old doctor had told him to laugh. He saw now that it was good,—a tonic.

While George was preparing the fish, the victorious angler occupied himself by pulling off his wet boots and wringing the water from his garments.

"You won't catch cold," the half-breed said. "You can't take a cold in these woods."

"Why not?"

"I don't know; some people say it's the pine and balsam; anyway, you won't catch cold."

The simple meal was soon ready, and Douglass fell to it with an appetite he had not known for many years. With a tin plate of fish on his lap, and a tin cup of coffee in his hand, he commented on the food between bites.

"Talk about your fish," he said; "I never ate fish that tasted like this; they don't have fish like this where I came from."

The man was hungry, and he had procured the food.

"You make good coffee, George," he said; "it's fine."

After they had eaten, George produced a pipe and filled it. The action made Douglass think of his own pipe; he had not smoked since they left State Line,—he had forgotten all about it. "I suppose that's a state of mind, too," he thought, as he filled and lighted the pipe. The tobacco was like all the other things,—it tasted better than any he had ever smoked. He had been a constant smoker, and a constant smoker has no conception of the pleasure of tobacco.

They smoked in silence for a time, then the guide strapped up the pack, brought up the canoe which had drifted ashore a few yards below them, and prepared to go on. Douglass

rose with a sigh, pulled on his boots, and took his seat in the canoe.

They crossed the lake, and another portage,—this time a longer one,—lay before them. The half-breed gave a few brief instructions.

“This is a sort of a blind trail,” he said; “better keep pretty close to me. If you fall behind and don’t feel sure of the path, don’t move another step; sit right down and holler. Then I’ll come back and look you up. Take it easy, it’s a bad trail.”

And so it proved. At times it led through a dense undergrowth; now and then a wind-fall lay across the path, and over the great prostrate trunk they must climb. They would sink to the knees in boggy spots. The guide went easily along with the heavy canoe on his head, jumping lightly on the fallen trees, and pushing resolutely through the tangled branches, while Douglass panted after him. He did not get lost, but saw readily how easy it would be to do so. In the density of the trees and undergrowth he frequently lost sight of his companion, although he could hear him crashing along a few yards ahead.

He was forced to call a halt in a few minutes, and the guide up-ended the canoe against a tree, and waited until he had recovered his spent breath.

Again they took up the journey, and after half an hour of grief a third lake lay suddenly before them. The lakes were always a surprise to Douglass, for no glimpse of them was visible until they stood upon their shores. He threw himself panting to the ground.

"Whew," he cried; "are there any more portages?"

"No, this lake connects with Crooked Lake by a river. We won't get out of the canoe till we get to Kaufman's shack. You'll have a good rest here while I go get the pack."

Douglass looked after him as he re-entered the trail. "Two dollars a day," he said; "great Scott!"

When George returned he found his employer lying on the bank asleep. He wakened him and they started onward. Douglass looked around for the opening to the river, but the banks were all alike to him,—a solid circle of trees. He did not see the river until they entered it. The stream was one with many turnings, and as the canoe slipped along its winding course, the guide whispered, "Keep quiet; we may see a deer, they feed in this creek."

Later they came upon a buck and two does feeding on the lily pads. The beautiful animals were standing belly-deep in the stream with their heads completely submerged. The

buck lifted his magnificent head first, looked thoughtfully at the canoe a moment and waded ashore, followed by his family.

They were the first wild deer Douglass had ever seen on their native heath, and he was greatly interested.

"I'll tell Billy Matthews about them," he remarked; "only I'll tell him there were six; he told me he saw four once."

They came out upon Crooked Lake just as the sun was sinking over the tree tops. It was a larger lake than any of the others, and on its farther shore a little log house stood. The guide pointed to it with his paddle: "That's Kaufman's shack,—I'll let him know we're coming." He made a trumpet of his hands, and sent a long, clear halloa across the water. A man appeared in the doorway for a moment, then disappeared within.

"He's gone to get supper for us," George explained.

"Good; I'm hungry again."

When the canoe grated on the bank at Kaufman's shack, the proprietor came out to welcome them. He was a gigantic, bearded man with a good-natured face. He greeted them cordially, but made no distinction between them,—a man was a man to Kaufman; sometimes less, but never more than a man.

"Come right in, come right in," he said in a voice as big as his frame. "Supper's on the fire; started her soon as I see you coming. My name's Kaufman, Bill for short;" he addressed the last to Douglass.

"And mine is John Douglass, Jack or Doug for short."

There was something that encouraged instant familiarity in the big man's honest bluntness. He breathed an atmosphere of powerful strength and wonderful magnetic health. As Douglass made his quick reply, the giant roared with laughter, as though he had heard the best joke in the world.

"I'll take Jack," he said. "Got some sheep for dinner; like sheep?"

"I don't ordinarily care for mutton," he replied, "but I like anything today."

At the mention of mutton, the big man slapped his leg and roared again. George explained that "sheep," in the vernacular of the woods, was venison.

Douglass had never eaten venison like that, and, in truth, it was not altogether his good appetite which made it taste so different. The venison of the woods and that of the city do not taste alike.

After supper the three men sat around and chatted for a time. If George had been a surprise, the host was a revelation. He had been

for years on the fringe of civilization; in California and Montana he had following the mining camps. He told tales of the woods and hills which were of absorbing interest, and his simple manner of relating them gave them the stamp of absolute truth. He was not wholly unread either, as the few books and magazines scattered about the cabin evidenced.

"Don't you get lonesome out here?" Dougless asked.

"Oh, it's a little dull sometimes, but I get lonesomer in a city. I left the towns twenty years ago, and now and then I'd drift back, but the times got further and further apart. Someway I need lots of elbow room; out here I have things my own way, and what with estimatin' timber, and trappin', and one thing and another, I keep busy and make a livin', more than a livin': I've got a thousand dollars in the bank at St. Paul, but I don't set much store by money." Pointing to a rifle hanging over the door, he added: "If I had to take my choice between that gun and the thousand dollars, I wouldn't look at the money. I never could see what a man wants with more money than he can use; even a chipmunk has got more brains than to carry more corn into his hole than he can eat."

When Douglas went to bed that night he gave a sigh of delicious satisfaction as he

stretched out on the rough mattress. He lay awake for a time revolving in his mind the events of the day; it had been most satisfactory, and had been full of pleasant surprises. He had seen new things, and had fallen in with men who cared for something besides dollars. The men were the greatest surprise of all: he had preconceived the inhabitants of a wilderness as uncouth, easily impressed with city grandeur, and longing for city life. He found them today intelligent, hospitable, and honest. He told himself that he had met two superior specimens: he was mistaken. The exaggerated types of fiction and stageland exist in books and on the stage, but in truth, men are much alike the country over or, for that matter, the world over.

Sleepily he reviewed the newly acquired knowledge of the day. He could talk to Matthews now of portages and blind trails and doubling the trail, and land-locked lakes and wall-eyed pike and sheep and six deer.

It had been a good day,—a fine day,—and so deciding, he fell into a sweet, healthful sleep, and dreamed of placid lakes and trees and quiet streams, and finally, of catching a gigantic fish with cold, grey eyes, and a slit for a mouth.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAP MAKER.

For the next week Douglass remained at Crooked Lake, finding new things each day to interest him, and gaining rapidly in health, strength, and knowledge. He began to feel himself quite a woodsman, and talked glibly with Kaufman and George in the new vernacular he was acquiring. He viewed each novelty with boyish curiosity, paddled his canoe well enough, and even essayed to carry it across a short portage on one of the daily trips, but gave it up before he had gone ten rods. He awakened each morning early, fresh and ready to jump out of bed and run for a plunge in the cool waters of the lake, and looked forward to meal time with pleasure. He contrasted this arising with the slow torture of that process during the last few years of his fevered life. The old sluggish depression dropped from him like a smothering mantle, and at times he could scarcely refrain from filling his lungs with the clear, clean air and expelling it in a long, meaningless shout. He was beginning to be a normal being.

To be sure, two weeks of right living had not made of him a whole, strong man, but

nature, assured of his co-operation, had set her myriad of tiny architects to work repairing the breaches which years of strain and dissipation had made.

He thought sometimes of the city, and wondered how long the novelty of his present estate would hold him. He hoped a long time, a very long time.

Meanwhile he was already formulating plans for extending his trip. The stories of scenes a little farther on interested him greatly. He had about decided to enter the Ontonagon River and push up that stream for a few days, when an event occurred to change his plans.

As they were seating themselves at supper one evening, a canoe grated on the beach and a stranger walked into the cabin. He spoke to Kaufman and George familiarly, but Douglass noted that his host did not greet him very cordially. The newcomer removed his coat and seated himself at the table without any preliminaries, as is the custom in those parts. Douglass looked him over and decided at once that he did not like him. His forehead was too narrow, and his eyes were too close together. He conversed pleasantly, however, and Douglass soon learned that his name was Wilson, and that he knew the woods remarkably well.

"Come in from Rest Lake?" George asked.

The stranger nodded.

"Estimatin' timber?"

"No, making a government map. I've been from one end of these waters to the other; if I was to follow instructions and put down every lake I find, they would need a book for the names. Fact is, half of 'em haven't got any names, and I've invented names till I've run out."

"Come through Wildcat Lake?"

"Yes, and worse than that. I found a little lake near Wildcat that aint on any of the maps; I named it 'The Kitten.' I found another new lake twenty miles the other side of Wildcat, on an old Indian trail that had been blazed out, I 'spose, fifty years ago. I've seen many a pretty lake in this country,—I've been all over the Manitowish Waters, Turtle Waters, and the Eagle Waters, and I aint much for pretty lakes, not when you have to chop your way to 'em,—but this one beats 'em all; it's a beauty. It's round as a bowl, and there's a little island right in the center of it, like the hub of a wheel."

He took a chart from his pocket and spread it on his knee, and put his finger on one of the little circles with which it was covered.

"Here it is," he said; "I named it 'Lost Lake.' I don't guess any one will bother it for a while, it took me two days to get to it."

Kaufman was looking at the chart; he put his finger on another circle near the one Wilson had indicated. "That's Harrison's Lake, I suppose," he said.

"Yes," Wilson answered slowly, "that's Harrison's."

"Harrison living there yet?"

"Yes, Harrison's living there yet."

"You talk like a parrot," Kaufman said.

The man scowled, folded the map and replaced it in his pocket.

"I'd like to go to Lost Lake," Douglass said to George.

Wilson surveyed him critically: "Well, you won't go there," he said.

Then he took the chart out of his pocket and spread it on his knees again. "Here's Crooked Lake, where you are now," he said, pointing out the spot on the map, "and here's Lost Lake, and right in here" (indicating a circle midway between the two) "is where the good trails end. I didn't name that lake yet, but I'm going to call it 'Tenderfoot Lake,' because that's as far as a tenderfoot would ever get."

Douglass flushed but made no response. Kaufman had gone outside to feed his dog, a friendly little water-spaniel by which he set great store. Wilson was not so brisk when Kaufman was around.

"Then, again," Wilson continued, "there's bears on that Lost Lake trail; I saw their sign."

Douglass eyed him for a moment, then said in the cool, insolent manner he could so easily assume, "Are you afraid of bears?"

Before the map maker could frame a suitable answer, Kaufman entered. He heard the query Douglass had made, and noted by its tone and Wilson's look that there had been some quibbling. He took it upon himself to answer the question.

"No; Wilson aint afraid of bears; cause why, cause the bears is afraid of him. A bear is the biggest coward on earth."

The map maker made no reply, but walking out of the cabin and down to the beach, prepared to leave.

After a moment's hesitation Douglass followed him; he did not feel satisfied with himself,—he was not sure but that his early prejudice against the man had been unjust, and had led him to imagine insult where none was intended. Besides, he wanted to hear more about Lost Lake.

"Who owns that island in Lost Lake," he asked the map maker. His ideas of titles in this region were very vague.

The man looked at him contemptuously. "Nobody," he answered briefly, and began

shoving his canoe into the water. As he pushed the boat out, a rope, which was attached to the prow, dragged along after it. Kaufman's water-spaniel ran up and seized it playfully in his teeth. With an oath, Wilson kicked the dog viciously in the ribs, and the spaniel ran howling away.

Kaufman was out through the door at the first yelp of his pet, but he was not quick enough, for Wilson lay stretched on the sand with a bleeding face, and Douglass was standing over him with a fierce, unholy joy in his heart.

"He kicked your dog, Kaufman," he cried; "the little fellow was playing with the rope."

Kaufman strode up to Wilson and lifting him in one hand by the collar, shook him as a terrier does a rat and threw him headlong into the lake. Then he pushed the canoe off fiercely with his foot and roared:

"Don't you never beach that canoe on this side again, damn you."

The map maker crawled into his boat without a word, and the men entered the cabin again. Inside, Kaufman seized Douglass' hand in a hearty grip.

"Jack," he said, "you're all right, you done him fine. I aint got no use for a man that'll kick a dog."

Douglass was well pleased. He never had struck a man before, but he had no regret for his action, and Kaufman's honest approbation added to the victory.

Before he went to bed that night he said to George:

"Could you find that Lost Lake?"

"Yes."

"How long would it take to go there?"

George reflected; estimated the time it would take him alone, and multiplied it by three.

"Six days; we could go to Harrison's in three days and rest a day or two, and then cut in from there."

"Do you know the way to Harrison's?"

"I've never been there, but I can find it."

"All right, we'll start tomorrow. I'm going to camp on Nobody's Island before I stop."

"I'll bet you will," roared Kaufman, "just because that skunk said you couldn't go there."

Which showed that Kaufman was no poor judge of human nature.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRISON'S LAKE.

Three days later the two men stood on the North shore of Harrison's Lake. The last portage, a long one, had been a severe trial on Douglass' nerve and endurance, but he had never entertained a thought of turning back. Twice he missed the obscure trail, and following George's instructions, stopped short and shouted. The first time, the guide was far ahead, struggling with the dense crackling undergrowth and did not hear the cry. For a fleeting second Douglass realized what being lost in the forest meant. The silence, which had seemed so novel and beautiful to him before, became terrible now. He recalled vividly the stories Kaufman had told of men who, lost among these trees, had never been heard of again until some wanderer chanced upon their bones. A chill of fear struck him and he shouted again with redoubled energy. The answering halloa of the guide was sweet music to his ears.

As he pushed, and climbed, and crawled his way along that last trail it was clear to him why Wilson had doubted his ability to reach

Lost Lake, but now as he stood on the shore with the prospect of a rest, and the knowledge of a victory, he felt a thrill of gratification. He was more of a man than Wilson thought him.

Exhausted as he was, he could not refrain from a little harmless acting, and as they sat down to rest he carelessly filled and lighted his pipe and remarked nonchalantly to George: "Pretty tough trail, that."

"About as bad as it could be. It's the worst and longest portage I've found in these waters. I wouldn't have believed any one but a woodsman could have followed it. You're a wonder."

They rested for a brief time and looked about them; the lake was larger than any they had yet seen,—several miles in diameter. Away over near the south shore was a small island which was cleared of trees, and near its center stood a great rambling log cabin.

"That's the biggest cabin I ever saw," George said; "must be Harrison's place."

"Well, we might as well go over and get acquainted; hope he's another trump like Kaufman."

They embarked and set out for the island. To Douglass the prospect of a habitation and a bed after two nights in the forest was very pleasant. He had enjoyed all his new ex-

periences, and his interest had not begun to flag, but a little touch of civilization would not come amiss now. Even primitive man's first thought after food was of a shelter and something soft to rest upon. Also he was getting a little less enthusiastic about a fish diet. He wondered if they would have as good a larder in yonder cabin as Kaufman had exhibited.

In the trip across the lake his fatigue left him. He took off his cap and let the fresh breeze fan his unkempt hair. He thought with a smile of what a bedraggled appearance he must present, and wondered what his friends at home would say could they see him now.

As they neared the island a man came to the door of the cabin and stood looking out over the water. George instantly gave his halloa of greeting, and the man turned his gaze on the canoe for a moment, then walked to the water's edge and waited.

As they drew near, Douglass noted that he was a tall spare man, about sixty years of age, with white hair and a soldierly bearing. His face and general mien were not exactly in keeping with the locality. He was brown and active looking, but the face was more that of the scholar than of the woodsman. He did not speak until they were almost to the beach, then in a deep pleasant voice he said:

"You came over the Wildcat trail,—it is a long time since strangers have entered there."

The words, the accent, and the ease with which he spoke told Douglass instantly that this was a gentleman, a man of culture. The knowledge surprised and pleased him; he felt that the presence of such a man in this solitude promised a new experience, or a story.

When they stepped upon the beach, the stranger approached and extended his hand courteously:

"You are welcome, sir," he said, "none the less because you were unexpected. My name is Harrison."

"And mine is Douglass."

He acknowledged the information with a smile, and turning to George, said:

"Take the pack right up to the house;" then he turned to Douglass:

"You have had a hard trip; most of our visitors come in on the Manitowish River, it is a comparatively easy route; you must be very tired."

"No," Douglass answered, "I was pretty well done up when we reached your lake, but the trip across has refreshed me."

The white-haired man led the way to the cabin, and stood aside for Douglass to enter, which he did, but he stopped just inside the door,

lost in amazement. The man had been a surprise,—the room in which he now found himself was a marvel. It was an apartment fully thirty feet square, the floor covered with rugs of bear, deer, and fox skins. Rustic chairs of various designs were scattered about the room, and in the center was a huge table of hewn logs, covered with an Indian blanket, and strewn with books and magazines. The walls were hung with mounted skins and pictures drawn on sheets of birch bark. Above the fireplace hung a pair of magnificent antlers. Shelves filled with books covered one side of the room, but save for these and the argand lamp which hung above the table, everything was a product of the forest.

With keen appreciation, Douglass noted that not a single piece of trumpery spoiled the congruity. The room was the work of an artist.

He suddenly became conscious that his host was eyeing him quizzically.

"You must pardon me," Douglass said. "This room astonished me so much I forgot my manners. It is the most perfect thing of its kind imaginable."

"I am gratified to hear you say so; it is a great pleasure to me to have the place surprise people; it is the pride of the architect, for almost everything here I made with my own hands."

Then Douglass became suddenly aware of his three days' beard and his torn clothing, for a door opened and a young girl entered. She stopped at sight of the stranger; she was surprised but not embarrassed.

"Why, we've got company," she cried in a clear, sweet voice, and came at once to Douglass with extended hand.

"My daughter Mary," Harrison said: "Mr. Douglass, dear."

Douglass could not decide whether she was a child or a woman. Her short walking skirt gave her the appearance of being below the average height, and the frank, unembarrassed greeting was childlike in its simplicity. But one thing he could and did decide quickly, and that was that she was very pretty.

The skin of her face was tanned and brown, and the firm little hand she gave him was of like color, but the low neck and loose sleeves of her simple bodice showed a glimpse of creamy whiteness. She was slender, but exquisitely formed and very graceful; her abundant black hair was combed from her low forehead, and hung in one thick braid below her waist, and all about her was the indescribable beauty of perfect health.

As Douglass returned her greeting lamely, and murmured something about his unkempt appearance, she smiled up at him frankly, and

said: "I mustn't stand here talking, for I know you are very hungry. Father will show you your room, and I'll see about your supper."

At the door she turned and smiled back at him: "You are welcome," she said; I suppose Father told you so."

George, who had busied himself about the canoe, now came up with the pack. Their host led the way to two rooms which opened off the larger apartment.

"You'll find everything you require, I think. Make yourselves at home."

George loosened the packs, selected his own belongings and withdrew.

Douglass said not a word; he was too saturated with wonder to talk. He sat down on the bed and stared straight before him for a few minutes, and then said half aloud: "Well, I'll be damned," and as he shaved and made such alterations in his appearance as he could, he had recourse to that satisfying expression some twenty times.

At supper another pleasant surprise awaited him: The girl had donned a dress of soft, white material, and coiled her hair in a mass upon her head. These simple changes seemed to transform her, and he was undecided which was the more entrancing, the little maiden of the woods or this beautiful young woman.

The supper was excellent and well served. The guest said little, but listened with pleasure to Harrison's deep, musical voice as he talked of the cabin and its environments. The young girl chatted merrily and winningly, and asked questions with a charming frankness and naivete. By the time the meal was over, Douglass decided that she was a child after all; there was about her a total lack of artificiality or embarrassment, but despite her innocence and youth, he felt that she was discerning. She looked full in his eyes when he addressed her, and two or three times when some conventional compliment or phrase was on his lips, the words remained unuttered.

After supper they returned to the large living room, and Harrison produced some excellent cigars. As they smoked Douglass said:

"I cannot help telling you what a monumental surprise everything about this place is to me. I had naturally expected to find the customary surroundings of the forest dweller, and I cannot bring myself to realize that such appointments as you have are possible in this remote district."

Harrison smiled. "As I told you," he said, "I have a weakness for observing the effect of my arrangements on the chance visitor, but in truth there is nothing extraordinary about it. I have simply taken from civilization such

things as I wanted, and busied myself supplying the rest. I make brief pilgrimages to Manitowish every two or three weeks, and order, or bring back, whatever appears necessary to my comfort, provided it is something which I cannot myself manufacture or procure here. I wish to exercise my inventive genius and also to keep busy."

"You have lived here long?"

"Over eighteen years. Forty years of my life I spent in the cities; circumstances which would not interest you brought me here. The place grew to have many attractions for me; at first I did not think of remaining here, but little by little I grew more away from the populous world, and now I look upon the time when I shall leave here with deep regret."

There was a note of sadness in the last words. The speaker paused and reflected for a little and then continued:

"My daughter was born here, but the time will probably come when she will want to see the world, and when it does, I will take her into it."

"But she has already been away? She appears,—" Douglass stopped; it was not the right thing to say.

The older man relieved his embarrassment promptly.

"She appears educated? So she is: I have been her constant and only tutor. One naturally jumps to the conclusion that education and culture are products of the cities only, but that assumption will not bear analysis. The child is unlearned in many things, but they are for the most part things which it is best for her not to know. She is innocent and honest. With the exception of the two times when she accompanied me to Manitowish she has never been away from the island. Knowing nothing of the world, she has never cared for it,—she is happy here, but the world may call her some day."

Douglass sat silent and interested.

"I said she was born here," Harrison continued; her Mother died a short time after her birth and is buried on this island."

At this moment Mary entered the room and seating herself on her Father's knee, threw her arm about his neck.

Douglass was at a loss as to how he should address her. "Miss Harrison" did not accord with her or her surroundings, "Mary" was out of the question, and "Miss Mary" was worse than either; so he avoided the name altogether.

"How long are you going to stay," she asked, and both men smiled at the direct question.

"I think we will push on tomorrow."

"Oh, you mustn't think of such a thing, you must stay ever so long. Father likes you, I can always tell in a minute when he likes people." Then artlessly: "Father, make him stay, I like him, too."

Both men laughed aloud at this, and her clear voice joined in the merriment.

"Where are you bound for?" Harrison asked.

"We met a map-maker who told us of a wonderful lake he had discovered and named 'Lost Lake,' and we set out to find it. You probably know him, his name is Wilson."

"Yes."

The girl sprang to her feet and addressed Douglass excitedly: "He told you he found it and named it?" she cried.

"Yes," Douglass answered, surprised at her vehemence.

"Well, he didn't. I found the old blaze one day in the woods, and Father and I followed it a week later and found the lake, and I named it 'Lost Lake.'"

Douglass did not know what to say; he did not want to speak ill of the man, so he kept silent. The father and daughter exchanged meaning glances, then Harrison led away from the subject.

"If you are going in there," he said, "I would suggest that you rest with us a few days and

let your guide go and improve the trail,—it is very bad. Mary goes everywhere in these woods, but on that trip I had to carry her frequently.”

The idea appeared a capital one to Douglass and he readily assented.

“I’ll show you lots of things while you’re waiting,” the girl cried. “I know every foot of these woods.”

Harrison laughed. “She knows them better than I do,” he said, patting her shoulder lovingly. “She is a little tramp.”

In the novelty and interest of the time they talked far into the evening. Suddenly the host rose and said:

“You’re tired out with a long, hard trip, you must go to bed. And you, too, little one, I won’t have any sleepy-heads around me these glorious mornings.”

She kissed him, gave Douglass her hand, and bade them good-night. From her room she called out to her father: “May I take Mr. Douglass over to Lake Mary?”

“Yes.”

“Tomorrow morning?”

“Yes, yes, if he wants to go.”

“Do you want to go?” she called to Douglass.

He did want to go, and said so.

When he lay down to rest that night he told himself that this had been a red-letter day. Everything had been gratifying, some things amazing. A scholarly man who lived in the woods, read Horace, and smoked Principe de Gales, and a girl,—a beautiful girl, who carried herself with the grace and ease of a young woman of the world, and who tramped in the forest alone, and told a strange man she liked him, and invited him for a trip in the woods with her. It was all novel and very delightful. He thought of her for a long time that night,—she was a revelation to him.

Let him not be misunderstood. In his admiration there were no foolish nor dishonest thoughts. He knew himself, a world-worn man of forty, and she was a child, not more than eighteen. She trusted him in her innocence, and moreover her father trusted him, for he had unhesitatingly given his consent to their expedition the next day. If any disloyalty to such early confidence had entered his mind he was man enough to have rejected it at once, but there was no such high treason in his heart. Perhaps,—I do not know,—but *perhaps* he sighed a little for his vanished youth, even as you or I.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW NOBILITY.

"Where did you get these birds?" Douglass ask the next morning at breakfast. "Do you keep a game preserve in addition to your other wonders?"

"Ask Mary," Harrison said.

She did not wait to be asked. "I shot them over on the West Shore this morning long before you got up. They are partridges; do you like them?"

"I never ate anything so good in my life."

"There are a few in these woods, but they are very hard to find; I knew where these lived and took the dog and went after them early. There were eleven in the covey; I could have killed them all."

Then she explained how the wood partridge will "tree" when a dog flushes them, and paying no attention to their human enemy, will sit stupidly on the limbs watching the dog, while the hunter picks them off one by one with a small rifle.

"Only you have to take care to begin with the lowest bird," she added. "If you kill the

top bird and he falls through the limbs where the others are sitting, they will all fly, but if you begin at the bottom and work up, you can get every bird. Do you like to shoot?"

"I have never used a rifle to any extent, but I belonged to a gun club once, years ago, and became quite expert with a shot-gun."

"There are wild ducks over in my lake, lots of them; if you promise to kill only two for our dinner, you may take Father's gun with us this morning."

Douglass promised. He was very glad of the suggestion; in fact, he had been a very good shot at the traps, and he was delighted to be able to demonstrate himself not wholly ignorant of all the things these people knew so well.

After breakfast they prepared for the trip which had been suggested the night before. Harrison handed his guest a shot-gun and ammunition, and as he took it, he noticed that it was a hammerless gun of high grade.

As he walked with his host to the beach, Mary preceded them; she was bare-headed, and looked charming in a white waist and dark blue serge skirt, made quite short; her small feet were encased in high russet walking boots, and she stepped with a lightness and grace that bespoke at once her good body and happy mind.

"We'll go in my canoe," she said, shoving it off before he could offer to assist her. "It goes easier than the big ones."

Douglass eyed the diminutive craft dubiously.

"Will it carry us both?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, if you sit quietly. Father made it small so I could carry it."

"Suppose you let me paddle?"

"No, you don't know the way, and I want you to be a sight-seer today."

He stepped obediently into the canoe, and Harrison shoved the boat off the beach. She paddled easily and tirelessly along, displaying a skill in handling the paddle which made Douglass thank his stars that she had not accepted his offer to propel the craft.

She drove the canoe straight across the lake, and almost before her passenger realized it, they had left the main body of water and were drifting along a quiet little river. The stream was narrow, and the branches of the trees met overhead and formed a leafy, half-lighted tunnel of green. There was no perceptible current, and so smooth was the surface of the water that every detail of the overhanging trees was reproduced below them. In the dim light, the clear water itself was almost invisible save where it rippled gently about the prow of the boat, and they seemed to float in mid-air.

For a time Douglass sat in silence, drinking in the beauty of the scene, then he said rapturously:

"How wonderful, how beautiful." He looked around at her and saw that she was smiling, pleased at his admiration.

"This is the river of Imagination," she said. "Father named it that. There is another creek on the east side of the lake that is very ugly, and you can't get along it at all, it is full of riffles and windfalls and mudholes. Father says that's the river of Superstition."

"This one at least is well-named. I can almost imagine myself drifting into Fairyland."

For an hour they slipped along, enjoying in silence the beauty of the river, or speaking in hushed voices as though they feared to waken some of the nymphs and dryads in the trees. Then they emerged into the full light of day as suddenly as they had left it, and Douglass saw that they were on a pretty little lake not over a half mile wide. He was about to speak, but Mary cautioned him in a whisper to get his gun ready. He did so, hoping in his heart of hearts that he might acquit himself creditably when the ducks appeared. She sent the canoe quietly around a little promontory and stopped before a great patch of wild rice, which extended from the shore far out into the waters

of the lake. Half a dozen ducks rose from the water, out of range, and flew rapidly away. Again she whispered "get ready," and then beat on the side of the canoe with her paddle. As the sharp sound broke the dead silence, the air was filled with whirring wings. The birds had been feeding in the rice. Douglass was rattled, he knew it, and the birds were gone before he had his gun to his shoulder. Just as he was about to utter an exclamation of disappointment, two belated mallards rose in easy range, and with a determination not to miss Douglass dropped them neatly, one to each barrel. It was one of the proudest moments of his life when he saw the big birds falling to the water.

"What a splendid shot you are," Mary cried, as she paddled to the dead birds. Douglass picked them up and smoothed their plumage with his fingers. Possibly there had been two such beautiful mallards killed before, but he doubted it.

"Now we can talk," Mary said, after the birds had been duly admired. "I'm going to run aground here for a moment, and you must turn around facing me. I want to see your face when you talk, the back of your head is not very eloquent."

"This is 'Lake Mary,'" she said after the change had been accomplished; "I named it

after myself,—do you think that it was a conceited thing to do?”

“No, I think it is a very pretty name.”

“And do you think Lake Mary is pretty?”

“Not as pretty as its sponsor,” he said, and instantly regretted the speech. His regret was short-lived, however, for he saw by her animated face that she was pleased.

“Do you really think I’m pretty?” she asked, with a bewitching smile.

He was in for it now: “Very pretty.”

“Oh, I’m glad you think so. When I first began to read stories I used to wonder if I were pretty, and so I would ask every one who came to the island. Almost before they had beached their canoes I would call out ‘You are welcome,—do you think I am pretty?’ But they laughed so at me,—Father most of all,—that I gave it up. I did so much want to know, and you can’t tell by looking at yourself in a mirror. Of course, that was when I was little, and I’ve learned better now, but anyway, I’m glad you think so.”

After a little smiling silence she asked:

“How long are you going to stay at ‘Lost Lake?’ ”

“I don’t know. I may camp there a long time. I have a desire to have an island all to myself, to be monarch of all I survey for a while. I asked Wilson who owned the island

in Lost Lake, and he said 'nobody,' so I mentally christened it 'Nobody's Island.'

"And you are going to be King of Nobody's Island," she cried in delight; "and Father can be the Lord of Harrison's Island, and that makes me the Lady."

"Yes," interrupted Douglass, "you can be Lady Mary," and he was secretly glad that he had found a name to call her.

She clapped her hands in childish enjoyment.

"How splendid, and you can ask Father for my hand in marriage, or rescue me from a tower or something," and they both laughed merrily.

They chatted on for a time and then she picked up her paddle.

"Now, King Douglass," she said, "we will return to the castle. Have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Had one of the pleasantest mornings of my life, Lady Mary."

They entered the river again and made their way homeward. On the way he learned another bit of woodcraft. Half way to Harrison's Lake the girl whispered to him and pointed with her paddle to a log which lay jutting out into the stream. At first he could discern nothing, but on a little closer inspection he saw an animal lying on the log asleep.

It was about a foot in length, and its heavily built body was covered with long, coarse hair. He laid his hand on the gun, but she cried softly: "Don't shoot; we never kill porcupines. They are the only food a man lost in the woods can get without a gun."

As they passed the log she raised the paddle and gave the animal a slap on the back, and it lumbered heavily along the log toward the shore. She held up the paddle for his inspection—the hard wood was stuck full of the sharp spines.

But the morning so pleasantly passed was to end in disaster. When they were half way across Harrison's Lake on their homeward trip, Douglass fumbled in his pocket for his pipe. Just as he brought it out it slipped from his hand. He made a grab for it, and in another instant they were both floundering in the water. His first thought was for the girl, but she cried out to him at once:

"Don't try to come to me, I'm all right. Can you swim?"

"A little," he gasped. "Are you sure you are safe?"

"Perfectly; don't let the canoe drift; you get in first."

He took a few strokes toward the boat. It had righted itself, and he laid his hand on the side. It spun over like a teetotum and he

went under the water again. When he came to the surface Mary was at one end of the canoe holding it.

"Now," she said, "don't touch the side; swim to the end and lay your hands on it and jump astride."

He did so easily and was in the boat in an instant.

"Now I'll get the paddle," she said,—it had drifted to some distance; she let go the boat, and swimming easily on her side, recovered it and returned with it to the canoe.

"Sit steady," she said, and springing easily upon the end of the boat, slipped down into her seat.

Douglass looked, as he felt, chagrined and contrite.

Mary looked at his woe-begone face and burst into a ringing laugh. He joined her half-heartedly.

"I hope you can forgive my awkwardness," he said. "I—"

"Why," she cried, "it's nothing. I've been out of this canoe a dozen times. Don't think about it at all. I can swim a mile, and a wetting is no new thing to me."

She set the canoe going again, and continued to belittle the incident. When they were near the beach her father came down to meet them, and in her clear, young voice she cried out:

"Oh, Father, we've had a glorious time, and Mr. Douglass is the King of Nobody's Island, and I'm Lady Mary, and he thinks I'm pretty, and he's a splendid shot, and made a double on mallards, and we got a ducking, and everything's been just splendid."

Her father laughed good-naturedly. "Couldn't wait till you got ashore to tell me about it," he said; "did you get your markings?"

"Of course. George," she said, turning to the half-breed who was coming from the house, "you see that rusty place where the spring comes down?" pointing to a red stain in the brush on the west shore of the Lake.

He nodded.

"And those three tall pines?" pointing to a group of giant trees on the east side.

He nodded again.

"Now from the front door of the cabin straight across to that fish-hawk's nest."

"All right," George said, "I'll get it."

This was all Greek to Douglass. He looked from one to the other in surprise. Harrison explained.

"If George goes to the spot where he is in line with the rust spot and the three pines, and also in a line with the hawk's nest and the cabin door, he will be on the spot where your canoe was overturned. I have taught Mary to

take her bearings when it is necessary. She does it very well, as you see."

"I should think she did," Douglass ejaculated, "but I'm still a little at sea. What do you want to know about that spot for?"

"Why," said Harrison with a smile, "I would like to have George go and bring in the shotgun."

"Great Scott," cried Douglass, "I was so flustered I forgot all about the gun."

"Pray, give yourself no concern about it. It will be easily recovered."

He put his arm about his daughter's waist and they walked toward the house.

"So you are Lady Mary," he said, "and our guest is a king."

"Yes, and you're a Lord, and I told King Douglass,—don't that sound grand,—that he might ask you for my hand in marriage."

Harrison roared with laughter, then they all laughed together, and the incident of the overturned canoe was forgotten.

* * * * *

When Douglass came to breakfast the next morning the gun was hanging in its accustomed place.

CHAPTER IX.

WHILE THE ROAD WAS MENDING.

On the following day George departed with axe and saw to improve the trail that led to Lost Lake. Harrison estimated that to make the trail fairly passable would require a week's work. Douglass was not sorry, for he was enjoying his present quarters very much. Lady Mary was a source of endless amusement and delight to him, and her father entertained him with his novel discourses on many subjects. It soon became apparent to him that this denizen of the woods knew more of books than he did. When Harrison had given an opinion he was always ready to support it by reference to some great writer, and as he would finish a discussion and walk to the book-shelves, his daughter would laugh and say: "Now he's going to prove it out of a book."

"No, not going to prove it," her father would reply, "just going to show you that some one agrees with me."

"The habit of accepting other people's ideas," he said to Douglass, "is the cause of a great many errors. Most of us are able to form clear conclusions for ourselves, but we don't like to do the necessary work, therefore we ac-

cept another's views, right or wrong. Precise thinking is very rare, and it is not because of lack of capacity, but because of laziness. The secret of the matter is that the mind, like the body, is naturally inactive and at rest. We must exercise it just as we exercise the body to keep it healthy and capable, and it requires just as much effort to do so as to take your regular physical exercise, and the reward is just as great.

"That is true," Douglass said, "although I have never viewed it in that exact light. The laborer thinks the man at the desk has an easy time simply because he is working in a different way."

"Exactly, and the man at the desk often envies the laborer. In order to be healthy in mind and body we must give both their regular exercise and see that neither is overworked. Light reading is a very poor form of exercise, but the systematic solving of a problem or careful study of a question of the day is excellent. When I have nothing else to occupy my mind, I frequently read Cavendish or Pole on Whist, and I understand the game very thoroughly, although I never played it. If I follow these writers, I am not only entertained, but I teach my brain to classify thoughts and ideas of any sort, just as I classify the suits of the cards in my hypothetical game."

"I find I can think more clearly since I have been away from the city, and physically healthy," Douglass said.

"Certainly. Brain and body are inter-dependent. The trouble is, we seldom find the golden mean. A man is either an athlete or a philosopher,—a prize fighter or a book-worm."

The day after George left, Douglass was looking at the birch-bark pictures which hung about the walls of the cabin. They were all good, but one of them attracted him especially. It was a picture of a lone brigand standing in a long sweep of roadway; he was muffled in a long cloak, his arms were folded, his slouch hat drawn low on his brow, and a black mask covered his face.

"I think this is about the most satisfying brigand I have ever seen," Douglass said.

"I was waiting to hear you express some such opinion," Harrison replied. "Do you know why it strikes you so?"

Douglass studied the picture a few moments.

"No," he replied, "I cannot explain why."

"It is a conceit of my own," Harrison said, "and I will explain the secret. You are particularly struck with the villainous face."

Douglass scrutinized the picture again, and turned to his host in surprise.

"Why, his face is wholly concealed."

"Exactly. No painter could produce a face which would conform with the varied ideas of individuals as to what was ideally villainous. Each man, however, holds such a picture in his mind's eye, and when he finds the correct setting, his imagination immediately supplies the face behind the mask."

Douglass mused for a moment and then said:

"That's a fact; I did see his face, and it was my ideal of a villainous one."

"No painter, no musician, no artist can hope to equal the perfection of the imagination," Harrison continued. "I remember when I was a young man I had read Shakespeare earnestly and carefully. Richard the Third was my pet villain, and I looked forward with keen pleasure to an opportunity of seeing a great actor in that role, and at last the opportunity came, but I left the theatre that night bitterly disappointed. In my imagination I had painted the monster in a scene of blood and carnage, crying out in a terrible voice that rang out above the roar of battle, 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse,'—and the actor's conception and possibilities, excellent as I afterward knew them to be, were very tame compared with the picture I had conjured up."

Douglass laughed. "The same thing happened to me, and I suppose happens to every man."

“Not to every man, but to every man of imagination. I drew this picture we have been commenting on for the express purpose of testing my theory; I am greatly gratified at the result.”

On another occasion Douglass spoke of Kaufman and his rude simile of the chipmunk and the corn.

“He was right,” Harrison said. “Perhaps the greatest error of the world today, and an error which is particularly prevalent in our own country, is a total misunderstanding of the uses of money. The man who accumulates an enormous fortune, past all reasonable limits, should be blamed and pitied. Instead, he is looked up to and envied. This erroneous view by the poorer classes is partly responsible for the existence of the evil. The time will come,—it may be a long way off,—when the man who seeks to accumulate hundreds of millions will be looked upon as a monster, a being who is not normal,—exactly as Kaufman would look upon the chipmunk who worked himself to death storing up corn which he could not eat. When the proletariat cease to fawn upon these greedy creatures who foolishly burden themselves with superfluous wealth, the creatures will grow rarer and rarer until they vanish entirely. From the standpoint of the multi-millionaire himself he is, as I said, to be

pitied as well as looked upon with contempt, for he burdens himself with a care and labor productive of nothing. His money, past a certain point, has no value whatever; and yet in most cases he attaches to a dollar a value which the man in moderate circumstances knows nothing about. Understand, I make no objection to a man having a million, ten million, if he can find a genuine use for it in gratifying his good desires and tastes, but beyond that point he merely burdens himself and injures others."

"Power," Douglass suggested.

"What power, and to what end," his host inquired. "His wealth gives him the control of men and destinies which he has no moral right whatever to control. It permits him to dictate where he has no moral right to dictate. I can think of nothing more egotistical than the 'Captain of Industry' who says, 'I am more fitted to administer wealth than other men,' and straightway locks it up from the world, or diverts it to his own aims. And after all is said and done he gets nothing but worry and trouble from it. He loses his teeth and hair worrying about it, and he receives the contempt of all men whose opinions are worth having. I defy you to find in the world today one single man possessed of superfluous wealth

who will acknowledge that he is a happier or more contented man because of it."

"How about the great philanthropists?"

"I will grant that there have been men who have honestly accumulated a surplus of money, and employed it in good charities. They were under no obligations to do so, and their task was gratuitous. Life was given us to live and enjoy. It is not necessary that we do more than extend the charities of our own sphere of life; if all did that there would be no need for philanthropists. But I have no quarrel with the man who makes millions honestly and cleanly, and chooses to give them away. He is a cardinal exception. Lay your finger on one of our so-called philanthropists, and you often lay it on a thief and egotist, frequently a combination of the two. The thief seeks to cozen the poor out of two dollars, and save his soul by returning them one. I saw a picture of a beautiful stone building not long since, given to a city by a famous philanthropist. His own name appeared in letters a foot high over the central arch, and modestly flanking it on the panels at either side were the names of Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Milton, and others, in six-inch letters. I said a while ago that the 'Captain of Industry' was the greatest of egotists,—I withdraw the remark."

"But we have the satisfaction of knowing that long after his name is forgotten the other names will endure."

"Yes, after the stone arch itself has crumbled; and in that fact is a proof that the attainments of dollars are far inferior to the attainments of art and literature."

Harrison continued: "There is another point about philanthropy: if I as an individual secure a hundred millions, I necessarily subtract a large part of that sum from others. What right have I to assume that this wealth concentrated in my hands will be more charitably disbursed than if it remained scattered?"

"Suppose you were to find yourself suddenly possessed of a hundred millions tomorrow," Douglass asked, "what would you do?"

"I would divest myself of the surplus at once," Harrison answered without hesitation. "It would make no change in my life further than a brief annoyance in getting rid of it. In proof of my sincerity, if any is needed, I may say that I am already possessed of ample means, and that if I chose to do so, I could go where I liked and change my manner of living entirely. I am content here, and no sum of useless money could by its mere enormity change either my views or my life."

"That is remarkable," Douglass said.

"That, sir, is exactly what it is not. It is the healthy and normal view. I merely exercise the same faculties with which nature endowed the chipmunk."

But Douglass enjoyed Harrison's conversation most keenly when he talked about his daughter and her education.

"After her Mother died," Harrison said, "it was my intention to take the child and go back to civilization at once. The physician whom I had brought here warned me not to attempt the trip with her for some months, so I stayed on and on, and, contented as I myself was, a desire grew upon me to see what effect a perfectly normal life and education would have upon a child. When she grew old enough to understand, I often asked her if she wished to leave the island, but she seemed surprised, and even cried lustily at the mere idea. Later, when she began reading, she expressed a desire to go to the little town, and I took her, but she did not care to repeat the trip. Her isolation here has been no drawback to her good taste. I think you will find more gawks and greenhorns in a city than elsewhere. She dresses as she likes, and pays what she likes for the materials she orders. I venture to say that if she were to be transplanted to a city tomorrow, it would not be a week till she would be in full harmony with her surround-

ings. Gawkiness is more a matter of individuality than of locality."

"She is the most perfect specimen of a healthy and beautiful mind and body I have ever known," said Douglass.

Harrison flushed with pleasure. "It gratifies me very much to hear you say so," he said simply.

"She doesn't seem to be afraid of anything," Douglass added.

"She has not been educated to fear things. I have chosen her books, and little of the gruesome, superstitious, or false has fallen into her hands. She has been taught self-reliance. When she was a child I never punished her, consequently she never learned to deceive me. Many parents make liars of their children by frightening them. The child, committing some indiscretion, fears punishment, and naturally shields itself with a lie."

Harrison paused for a time and then smiled reflectively:

"When she was ten years old, she went out one day on the Wild-cat trail, the one you came in over. She was strong and healthy, and having little to carry, pushed on too far. Night fell and I grew worried. I had often warned her that if she was ever benighted on the trail never to try to follow it after the light had failed, but to camp where she was till

morning. I was confident my instructions would be obeyed, but nevertheless I was worried. I took a bulls-eye lantern and went half way along the trail before I found her. She had stuck to the trail till the light grew dim, and then had made a little bed of balsam boughs and lay on it sleeping sweetly. The remains of her little campfire, and the bones of fish showed me that she had not fasted. Do you know what I did then?"

"Awakened her and carried her home, I presume."

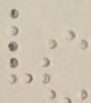
"That was my first instinct, but I did not follow it. If I had showed her that I was frightened about her my fear would have been communicated to her. Possibly if such a thing occurred again, she would attempt to relieve my anxiety and her own fears by pushing on. So I came home and left her lying there. I knew it was all right. The next morning she returned full of her experience, and I praised her for her action."

"She is a wonderful girl," Douglass said, "and has had a unique education."

"She is, as I said, fearless and self-reliant,—a perfectly normal child."

That evening after supper, when their cigars had been lighted, Harrison said to his daughter:

"Mary, you haven't sung for me for several days."



"I have been so busy with our guest and you, I haven't thought of it. I'll go sing to both of you now." Then to Douglass: "Do you want to hear me sing?"

"Yes, indeed, Lady Mary."

She ran lightly from the room and disappeared in the darkness. A little later her clear, sweet voice was borne to them from far out on the lake singing "Schubert's Serenade."

"She has the true artist's spirit," her Father said when the song was finished, and then sighed a little. "It is her Mother's blood; I believe the mother's blood is always predominant."

"I don't agree with you entirely; she has many of your traits."

Harrison looked at him strangely, and then said hastily:

"Traits, yes, but they are only imitations, not instinct. Her Mother sang very beautifully, and had the same artistic spirit which Mary displays in singing from her canoe instead of in the room. The mother's blood is predominant in us all for good or evil."

"I am not so sure of that; I have known bad men with good mothers."

"Certainly, but not many good men with bad mothers."

"Take my half-breed guide," Douglass said; "his mother, he tells me, was a full-blood

squaw, yet he has as little of the Indian in him as you or I."

"There are good squaws," Harrison replied. "And, again, you have had no chance to see the truth yet. Mark my words, his mother's blood is strong in him, and if the occasion ever arises when he is called upon to display it, you will see my theory justified."

Douglass laughed. "I hope it won't come," he answered.

That night as he reviewed the discussions of the day, Douglass told himself that his host was right about the money. Thoughts of money carried his mind back to Bruce. His animosity was waning in the novelty of changing scenes, and the rejuvenation of his shattered body. Nevertheless, he had promised Bruce that he would cry quits with him, and he had no intention of abandoning the idea. He decided that some time he would lay the whole matter before Harrison and see what his ideas were. He had views on most subjects; it would be interesting to know what he thought on this one.

He wondered what Harrison's story was. He well knew that there was something untold. On most subjects his host talked freely and frankly, but he had never mentioned the events which had brought him to the island, and Douglass, of course, did not broach the subject.

Also he thought of Mary.

CHAPTER X.

THE KING STARTS FOR HIS KINGDOM.

The ten days that elapsed before George returned passed very quickly for Douglass. He constantly found new interest in his host, who showed a versatility of thought and action which was astonishing. Everything seemed to interest him, but his research and experiment never carried him to the realm of impossibilities. He was interested in abstruse problems, but spent no time in trying to square the circle. When he tired of his books and problems, he went to his well-appointed carpenter shop and worked at anything that occurred to him, but he did not attempt to construct perpetual motion machines.

"There is much disappointment in attempting to solve or understand what lies beyond the limits of the human intellect," he said to Douglass, "yet those limitations are clearly enough defined. Wherever we find a wide difference of opinion among savants and scholars of all ages, we may decide at once that no provable answer to the question on which they differ has ever been found. When a correct explanation of a certain matter, the rotundity of the earth, for example, is offered, we find

that it is soon accepted universally. But when we review the question of the secret of existence and find a thousand jarring theories we may be sure no correct solution has ever been reached."

"Then you have no theory of your own on that subject?"

"No, I do not believe it is intended that we should know. If it were the wish of the creator that I should be able to grasp the meaning of space and time, it would have been made clear to me. A limitation has been placed in every branch of learning and discovery. Up to this point, thousands proceed, some rapidly, some haltingly, but they reach a bar at last, and from that point all efforts are abortive. In mathematics, for example, we go smoothly along, finding rules and solutions easily, and then bring up roundly at the quadrature of the circle. The more ambitious ones strive to go on, but they accomplish nothing. We study anatomy, we dissect the body and name all its parts and muscles; we know the functions of the heart, the brain, the blood—all these things ten thousand men learn and agree on, but the greatest student, the greatest scholar can give no explanation of life itself."

"Nor of death."

"It is much the same thing; I think the most contorted idea of the ages has been, and is the

fear of death. It is as natural to die as to be born, and the fear arises largely from bad education and strained thinking. Properly attuned, man would look forward to dissolution with equanimity. I do not speak of violent nor premature deaths,—they are hideous, because unnatural. And after all, the worry and fear of death finds its own fallacy in old age. The nearer man comes to the end of his natural span, the less he fears the end. I believe that often he comes, not to abhor it, but to feel the need of it.”

“That is a consoling view.”

“There is a greater and more consoling one,—the plain sound realization that it is all right. The birth and death of man are as natural as the budding and dropping of a rose. When the false and artificial fear of death comes to man, he has but to say cheerfully, ‘it’s all right, I know it must be all right.’ To look on death without qualms is natural, to look at it otherwise is morbid. The very nomenclature is bad: ‘the valley of the shadow,’ ‘the Stygian shore,’ ‘the worm and the winding sheet,’ are all terms calculated to convey terror to the unphilosophical mind.”

“And how has this view affected your daughter?”

“She is a proof of the theory. No superstition, morbidness, nor fear has ever touched

her. I doubt if she ever thinks about it at all."

"Suppose you were to die, would it not grieve her greatly?"

"That is beside the question; we are not discussing the pain of parting from loved ones. If I left her for a year she would weep; if forever, she would weep still more,—it is a matter of degree."

"My question was an unfair one, I admit. I would like to ask you another question. Do you think the world is growing better or worse as it grows older?"

Harrison straightened up from his work and said:

"Sir, it is growing better, slowly but surely. Its progress is gauged by the development of the human intellect. One by one the evils are dying out. We can look back a few centuries upon barbarities and horrors; today we find evils, but in a lesser degree. In centuries to come, the greater evils will be remedied until a fair state of civilization is reached."

"Do you think the reformers are accomplishing much good?"

"They are accomplishing something, but not in the way they usually intend. They are educating the masses. The schemes and hopes which they promulgate for the sudden overthrow of evil are but a dream. To cure in-

herent evils and passions by laws and regulations is impossible. As I said, the development of the intellect alone can bring society to an ideal state. When the reformers point out clearly certain evils, they aid in educating their unthinking brethren, and so, much good is done. Take the question of undue accumulation of wealth, for instance; all the socialistic laws and schemes will prove inadequate until people learn to look upon the dishonest and avaricious man as a creature to be shunned, not envied. Reform movements are merely evidences, out-croppings of the intellectual advance,—they are the visible proofs that we are progressing. To consider for an instant that they are the cause of advancement is simply to say 'the engine drives the steam.'"

"You think the time will come when avarice will be considered truly a vice, and the rich miser shunned?"

"It is coming now," Harrison said, extending his hand and pointing across the lake. "Yonder in the world you will find it, in the books, in the hearts and tongues of a thousand wise men. The power of money is still great, but it is slowly dying. Men will some day know that enough is more wholesome than a feast. I have no patience, however, with writers and expounders who try to formulate plans for reducing all men to a dead level. We will

always have our millionaires and our paupers. We can never set all intellects and all abilities to the same clock. The extremists, however, are legion; they are not content to attempt to keep men within their rights, they want to make them conform to a petty standard of mediocrity set by themselves. One would prevent me from accumulating money to gratify my tastes, another would have me eat no meat, yet another would bar me from amusing myself at a pleasant game played with harmless bits of pasteboard, because men misuse cards by gambling with them. The principle in the last case is as if you said to me: 'The dove is a wicked bird: men wager how far and how fast it can fly.'"

Mary, who had been on a lone expedition, came tripping up the beach with her arms filled with flowers, lilies and wild roses.

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

"We are discussing questions of state, Lady Mary," Douglass replied.

"Really, well, I've decided that you're not to ask Father for my hand."

"Indeed? Then I'll make war on you as soon as my standing army returns from clearing the trail."

"Splendid! He can chop down the portcullis and scale the battlements and rescue me from the ogre. Father, you will have to be the

ogre," she cried, sitting on his knee and rumpling his hair until it hung about his eyes.

The two men laughed heartily, and Harrison said:

"Why have you decided not to give King Douglass your hand?"

"He must do some gallant deed first; what have you ever done to earn such a reward?" she said to Douglass.

"Well, I killed two ducks, and I spilled you out of the boat. Can't we pretend that the two ducks were enemies and that I rescued you from a watery grave?"

She laughed merrily and flung her truant locks back from her eyes.

"No, that won't do, even for a make-believe. You must do something tremendous. Of course," she said musing, "the ogre might lock me up and you might come and steal me,—I couldn't help it if you stole me," she said archly.

"Well, I'll leave you to discuss your plans," Harrison said, rising. "I've got some work to do. I warn you not to steal her, King Douglass, she is no end of a little shrew."

When he was gone, Mary sat looking smilingly at Douglass for a time, then she said suddenly:

"How old are you?"

"Forty."

"Oh, dear!" she sighed thoughtfully, and despite the little tug at his heart strings, Douglass broke into a ringing laugh.

"You're always laughing at me," she cried; "you're an ogre, too. I don't believe you're forty, you act just like a big overgrown boy." Then stepping quickly behind him she rumbled his hair as she had her Father's and ran laughing to the cabin.

* * * * *

George returned that night and reported the trail clear.

"I've found a short cut," he said; "there's a creek that you can put into about half way across. I cut a path to it from the main trail."

"How long will it take us to go in?"

"One day. If we leave here early we will be at Lost Lake for supper."

Douglass reflected. He was loath to go: he realized that he wanted to be near these people, that he cared more for them both already than he did for anyone back there in the world. He was beginning to enjoy life keenly, and he saw that it was partly because he was with congenial people. He was better satisfied with himself than he had ever been before. The selfish grind of his old life did not appeal to him. As for the whiskey, he had

come to realize that it had no part in his new existence. He wondered if the craving for it would return when he went back to town. He knew he would go back some day, but there was no hurry,—he would not go until he tired of the woods. He turned to Harrison:

"I believe I'll build a cabin on Nobody's Island and be neighbors with you for a while," he said.

Mary began clapping her hands as soon as he had uttered the first few words, and when he finished she cried out joyfully:

"Oh, yes, please do, and don't go away for ever so long."

"You can easily do that," Harrison said with a look of genuine pleasure on his face. "I have a man of all work who can help you. He is in St. Paul now, but I will send him over as soon as he returns, which will be in about a week. You will enjoy the work hugely, more than I can tell you."

"Well, it's decided; I'll do it."

"You must have a house-warming when you finish your abode," Harrison said. "This young mischief and I will come over and help dedicate the place."

As Douglass walked on the beach that evening reflecting on his plans, the little forest maiden came quietly beside him, and slipping her arm through his, walked with him.

"I'm so happy," she said, smiling up into his face. "We will enjoy having you near us so much, Father and I."

He was touched, and a trifle embarrassed. He thrilled a little as he looked down into her beautiful, earnest face, for she was less a child than a woman now.

"It is really to be near you both that I am staying," he said.

She laid her other hand upon his arm and said again that she was happy.

"You are always happy, Lady Mary, you enjoy everything in the world."

"Yes, I do, I do. Father says it is because I am normal and healthy. I was never sick a day in my life. I love to tramp in the woods, to paddle my canoe, to work and to sleep, and, most of all, I love to talk and eat. Now you're laughing again."

* * * * *

Harrison and Douglass and George talked late that night of the plans for the new cabin. Harrison drew sketches and suggested ideas and made a list of tools they must be sure to take from his workroom. He grew almost boyish in his enthusiasm as they progressed, and Douglass entered into the plans with like spirit. Before they went to bed they had projected schemes and fixtures enough to cover an acre of ground, but

that did not detract from the pleasure of the visions.

The next morning bright and early they took their leave. The men shook hands heartily and talked of their next meeting. Mary came up to Douglass quietly and said, "Good bye, I like you better than any one I ever knew except my Father."

Then very simply, very naturally, she came close to him and turned her face up for him to kiss.

On the further shore Douglass turned and looked back. The white-haired man was standing with his arm about his daughter's waist, and they both waved their hands to him as he plunged into the forest.

CHAPTER XI.

NOBODY'S ISLAND.

Wilson's description of Lost Lake had interested Douglass, but it had not led him to expect too much. His observation had led him to believe that all lakes in this region looked pretty much alike. Therefore exaggerated expectations did not mar his first view of it.

They came upon it in the evening. The canoe, winding along the devious course of the river, slipped quietly out upon its placid waters, and Lost Lake and Nobody's Island lay before them.

The lake was circular in shape and about a mile in diameter. In the centre was a little island, also circular in form, consisting of about ten acres of ground covered with a heavy growth of brush and giant trees.

The sun was just sinking behind the trees as they came upon the lake, and its rays, broken by the dense verdure, fell around the canoe in a million flecks of gold. There was no wind, not a ripple stirred the surface, and the dead sheet of water was like a great dark mirror set in a frame of green pines.

The guide stopped his paddle as they left the river, and they now lay motionless a few yards

from the shore. The whole scene was to Douglass exquisitely beautiful and infinitely peaceful. He had noted before, since he had left town, how strange absolute silence is to the man who has never experienced it. We think sometimes, we of the town, that we know what silence is, but there is noise always. In the dead of night there is a constant hum; we cannot distinguish its component parts, we cannot tell even that it exists, but let it once stop and its absence would be keenly perceptible.

It seemed to Douglass now that there was in this overwhelming quietude some hint, some suggestion of the mighty power that swings the world noiselessly through space. The thought was dim, incomprehensible, born not of words, nor of logic, but of silence, and with a sense of self-abnegation he had never known before, he quietly, unconsciously bared his head.

The spell lasted but a moment. A tiny silver fish leaped joyfully near the canoe, and, as if that little splash were the signal to return to earth, Douglass sighed, and George drove the paddle into the water.

They reached the island just as dusk was falling. Douglass could scarcely wait for daylight to examine his domain, but was forced to content himself sitting in the little tent with George, making plans for the morrow.

At daybreak they were stirring. Axes and saws were laid out, a site for the cabin was selected, measurements were made, and with a will they set about clearing the space.

Douglass had decided to gradually cut away the trees and brush till nothing was left but a wall of verdure about the edges of the island. This would give him a circular park fenced around with the natural woodland growth. The larger trees they cut would serve for the cabin, the brushwood they would burn when the clearing should be large enough to make it safe to do so.

Following Harrison's advice, he gave himself no concern about the furnishing as yet, except to keep a list of things that would be needed, as they occurred to him.

The plans roughly formulated, they set to work. Douglass had made up his mind to have a part in all that was accomplished; and he swung his axe vigorously, careless of his blistering hands. The smaller trees they chopped down, the larger ones were felled with the two-handed saw they had brought in from Harrison's. Douglass tugged and perspired at this instrument of torture until his back ached and his arms grew numb. But each day's work was easier than the day preceding, and now and then in the evening he rolled back his shirt sleeves and fingered the growing and hardening muscles of his arms with satisfaction. In a few days his hands ceased

to blister and his back to ache. While he worked he sang. It was not a very good song, nor was it very well sung, but it was a song nevertheless, the only one that memory had retained from his impoverished youth. The half-breed soon caught the refrain, and as they bellowed it lustily together, they kept time with the strokes of their axes.

The pile of notched logs grew daily, and the space in the centre of the island gradually widened. In ten days they made an estimate and decided that they had enough logs for a two-room cabin. Then they began "hewing out," shaping the logs flat for the floors. This proved a tedious job; making boards in a primitive way is a slow operation. There is nothing so precious, nor so scarce, in the woods as a board.

The task completed, they laid and propped their floors on the solid trunks which they had sawed to equal heights on the cabin site, and waited the advent of Harrison's half-breed, for they would need three men for the "rolling up." He came the next day, and the walls began slowly rising. In two days the walls were up, and next the roof logs were rolled into place, and the heavy work was over. It only remained to make the doors and windows and fire-place, then thatch the roof, and the cabin would be complete.

Douglass walked around the clean, solid structure and admired it, then he went inside

and admired it; then, coming out, he walked down to the beach and strolled carelessly back through the trees to see what the effect was when it burst suddenly upon the vision. From every point of view it was perfection. He felt very sure that there had never been quite as handsome and substantial a log cabin in the world before, and for him there never had been, for he had helped to build it with his own hands.

As they occurred to him, he made a list of the things he wanted, tools, nails, kitchen utensils, canned goods, bedding and a hundred and one things, and it was decided that George and Harrison's half-breed, who gave his name as "Mac" and considered that as all-sufficient, should go at once to Manitowish and fetch them.

"Meanwhile I'll exercise my ingenuity with such tools as I have and make some furniture," Douglass said. "How soon can you get back?"

"Three days," Mac answered, "if George he can go through the trails as fast as I can and carry as big a pack."

"George he can go faster than you can and carry a bigger pack," that individual modestly responded, and Mac grinned expansively.

CHAPTER XII.

A WARNING.

George and Mac set out at daybreak of the fifteenth day on Nobody's Island. Douglass felt a little lonesome at first, but he knew the cure—he must keep busy. The first day of their absence he constructed a four-post bedstead of straight, clean saplings, heaped it with balsam boughs and slept on it that night. The next day he made two chairs and hewed out logs for a table. The work progressed rapidly and well, and he admired his productions as much as he had admired the cabin. He did not get very lonesome, for his tasks occupied his mind, and at night he was too tired to do anything but sleep. Nevertheless, he knew that if it were not for his work he would grow discontented in an hour, and even when he was fully occupied he knew that the presence of a companion, if only a half-breed, was a great boon. There never yet was a man so self-sufficient, or so crabbed, that he did not feel the need of at least one companion. Two men might live on a desert island and be bitter enemies, and go about their tasks in silence, but take one away and the other would be very lonesome.

On the morning of the third day, when Douglass awoke, his first thought was that he was glad his men would be back that evening. When he had dressed he threw open his door and stood for a minute filling his lungs with the clean, pine-laden air. He decided that he would catch a fish for breakfast and stepped back into the cabin to get his lines. As he did so his eye fell upon something lying on the door-sill. It was a white envelope with the superscription upward. He stared stupidly at it. How in the world had it come there? For a long time he stood looking at it like Robinson Crusoe at the footprint in the sand. Then he picked it up. It was addressed to him in a scrawling, half-printed hand. He turned it over and looked at the back, as if to gain some intelligence from that. Then it occurred to him that perhaps George had returned and left it there; but no, there was only one canoe on the beach, the one they had left for him.

At length he tore it open, and on the single sheet of paper it contained, in the same hand as the address, he read:

"You're not wanted here. If you are in the Manitowish Waters one week from to-day, you will never leave them alive. This means business."

He stared at the message in blank surprise, for there was no signature. It was a thunderbolt from a clear sky. He sat down to think the matter over calmly.

That some one had visited him in the night and thrust the letter under the door was a certainty. Who was it? He went over each acquaintance he had made since his arrival at State Line. Kaufman was out of the question; Wilson had reason for dislike, but this letter showed a plain desire on the part of the writer not to injure him, but to drive him from the place. If Wilson harbored resentment this would not be the natural way to show it. It could not be a joke or test from Harrison or his daughter—they were not that sort; George, he knew he could trust, and George could account for Mac. He turned and twisted the problem a hundred ways, but could find no solution.

Then he went out and examined the island carefully—no one there; he could find no clue to his nocturnal visitor. Returning to the cabin he sat down and read the message again.

"It's no joke," he said; "people don't make trips at night to such spots as this for a joke. What the devil does it mean?"

He thought perhaps George could throw some light on it, and decided to lay the matter before him on his return. Then he kept it from his mind as best he could, and went about his work.

The two men returned just at nightfall; they opened the packs and soon all three were busy examining the contents. The pleasure of the

operation was marred for Douglass by the matter on his mind, and George looked at him curiously once or twice, shrewdly detecting a change in his manner.

Douglass said nothing until they had had supper and Mac had retired to the tent where the men still slept. George was preparing to do the same when Douglass called him, and taking the lantern from its hook, handed it and the letter to him, briefly detailing the incident of finding it.

The half-breed read the scrawl with a surprise that left no lingering doubt in Douglass's mind as to his ignorance of the writer.

"What do you make of it?" the half-breed asked, handing it back.

"Nothing at all; I thought you might give me an idea."

George looked at him quickly. "You don't think——"

"Of course not, I'd trust you to the limit."

He looked gratified and began studying. Douglass knew that he was going over the same mental ground as he had himself traversed so carefully, and said:

"It wasn't Kaufman, nor Wilson, nor Harrison, nor you, nor Mac."

"No, it wasn't Mac, he was with me every minute, and he ain't that kind. He likes you and he's all straight. You can size a man up pretty

well on three days of bad trails. I can't think of any one but that Wilson."

"But if he wanted to injure me he wouldn't give me warning; he could kill me from the trees and no one be the wiser. The writer of this simply wants me to get out, and wants that so heartily that he threatens to kill me if I don't go."

"Are you going?"

Douglass flushed. "Not by a damn sight," he said. "If I'd had my pack ready to leave when I got this note, I'd have begun pulling the ropes off."

"I thought so," George said quietly. "I'll be right here with you, and I'll keep my eyes open."

Douglass extended his hand without a word. If the blood of this man's mother was predominant, Douglass thought, there must be some mighty good traits about the Indian.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPRING GUN.

With a philosophical spirit which had always stood him in good stead, Douglass decided to make no change in his daily routine because of the warning he had received. He argued correctly that the danger, if any existed, would not appear until the expiration of the time set for his departure. There was obviously no solution of the matter to be had, and he cautioned George to make no mention of the letter to Mac. He did not care to have the story go abroad; it might come to nothing, and if so, he would not have it appear that he had been greatly disturbed.

So they went on with their work, and soon the interior of the cabin began to assume an air of completeness. Mac left them when the heavy work was done, but returned within a day or two with a load of books and papers, a gift from Harrison. He reported that Mary had asked a great many questions, and had been particularly anxious to know when the projected house-warming was to take place.

Douglass sent her a grandiloquent scroll, done on birch bark, with the great seal of Nobody's Island in the corner, informing her that his court

would be ready to do her honor in two weeks. His real reason for delaying the invitation was to see what would come of his strange warning.

The seven days within which he was to leave the island came and went. The last day was a trying one; to say that he passed it without worry would be a ridiculous statement. A man who can face danger without fear is usually a fool; the man who does not know what fear is deserves no credit for his bravery. To be brave is to recognize danger and face it with determination and calmness, and Douglass faced the trying period bravely.

When the seventh day had passed he breathed easier. On the eighth day he began to laugh at his fears. "It was either a hoax or a bluff," he said to George.

George made no reply—his state of mind was not so easy, and while he kept his own counsel, he was greatly perturbed, for, unknown to Douglass, the seventh day had witnessed an event which had menaced him with death. It happened in this wise:

On the night of the seventh day, after the receipt of that mysterious missive, George, sleeping in his tent, was awakened about midnight by a thunder-shower. He remembered that he had left his coat in the canoe, and rising, went to the beach to fetch it. As he returned toward the cabin, a flash of lightning threw a faint light on

the door, and before it he saw something that made him stop short, amazed. It was a rifle, set on two forked twigs, pointing straight to the door. He knew at once what it meant, and, walking carefully and quietly to the spot, he felt cautiously for the hammer and lowered it. Then running his finger along the trigger guard, he slipped off the twine which he knew would be there, and feeling his way, followed it to the door hasp. He detached the string, laid the rifle on the ground and pulled up its two supports. Then, with his bare toes, he obliterated the holes where the pointed sticks had been pushed into the ground. Then he returned to his tent, put the whole paraphernalia under his mattress, and lay down to think.

There was no question now but that the note meant business. The rifle had been so placed that when Douglass opened the door in the morning he would have been shot in the breast.

George was a heavy sleeper, and almost invariably was awakened by Douglass, who rose at dawn for a plunge in the lake. But for the providential shower, and George's trip for his coat, Douglass would certainly have been shot. The half-breed saw at once that they were being watched; that whoever had placed the gun there had been aware of this early-rising habit of Douglass.

George slept no more that night, but lay turning the matter over in his mind, and debating what was best to do. It was clear that whoever this would-be assassin was, he must have been hiding in the woods and watching them. After long consideration he decided that it would do no good to tell Douglass of the episode, though this had been his first thought when he obliterated the marks before the door and concealed the rifle.

The first thing to do was to find out how and where the midnight visitor had come to the island, and where he had gone when he had left it.

At dawn he took out the rifle and examined it; it was a new one of the small, wicked calibre known as 30-30. He drew the single long cartridge from its chamber and examined it; the bullet was of the kind known as "mushroom," that is, the shank was made of hard metal and the nose of soft lead. This form of bullet is particularly deadly. When it strikes an object the soft metal flattens out with the impact, while the harder portion remains unchanged, forming a "mushroom" shape which tears a great, ragged hole.

He replaced the gun under the mattress, and, pounding on the cabin door, called to Douglass that he was going out to look for a deer; then he took his own rifle and went to the beach. Before pushing off he examined the ground

carefully and found what he expected, the mark made by the prow of a strange canoe. He paddled around the island—no other canoe on the lake. He now knew that the visiting canoe had either gone up the river or been pulled up the bank at some point. He was going to find that boat and its owner if he could.

When he had circumnavigated the island he found Douglass puffing and splashing in the water near the beach.

“You’re out early, George.”

“Yes, I heard a deer in the lake in the night. I’m going to find where he went out and get him.”

“Good, a venison steak will just about suit; we’re going to have company next week too.”

George paddled away. He thought to himself that if Douglass knew of the company that had recently come and gone he would not be taking things so easy. He paddled to the bank and began slowly working around the lake, examining every foot of the shore. This took him until noon, when he returned for dinner.

“Find him?” Douglass asked.

“No, he didn’t leave by the bank, he went up the river.”

He ate hurriedly and started out again, this time working up the stream, examining both banks with a practised eye. He followed the stream until a mass of fallen logs and brush marked the end of navigation. Then he rested

and cogitated. He reasoned that the occupant of the canoe must have stepped out into the water and lifted the boat ashore, without leaving any visible traces on the bank. He paddled slowly back, watching the bottom for shallow spots, and he soon found what he sought, a shallow place with boot-marks in the clay bottom. He tied his own canoe to a sapling and went quickly ashore in the direction the footprints pointed. He shaped his course through the tangled undergrowth along the line of least resistance. He knew from the character of the ground that the canoe could not have been carried far. He soon found it resting on one end against a tree. He examined it carefully—no clue there. Then he took out his knife and opened it, intending to destroy the boat, but he paused, studied for a moment, and replaced the knife in his pocket. Slipping quietly back into the brush he sat down, and sat there like a statue till nightfall. Then he went back to the cabin.

“What luck?” Douglass asked.

“Bad; I found his sign, but couldn’t come up with him.”

After supper George did some more thinking. At first he was inclined to tell Douglass the whole thing, but he had reasons of his own for changing his mind. The next morning he said:

“I want to go down to Manitowish for a day or two, if it’s all the same to you.”

"All right, I was going to ask you to go over to Harrison's in a few days anyhow and ask them to come over for a visit. I'll write Harrison a letter and you can carry it with you."

After a little silence he added, "I guess the wild man of the woods was a bluffer?"

"I don't think he'll bother you any more," George replied.

The next morning he started on the trail with the letter and his light pack.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN IN THE WOODS.

The day after George's departure Douglass busied himself arranging and rearranging the interior of his cabin. He wanted things to look as imposing as possible when his guests arrived. As he viewed the disposal of his limited furnishings, and the appearance of the cabin, he said to himself that he had accomplished a great deal in a month. Here was a place of habitation, a good substantial one, furnished with all the necessities of life, where, four weeks before, there had been but dense wood and underbrush.

He sat down and figured the total cost—George's work, Mac's work, the things that had been purchased at Manitowish—all less than two hundred dollars. He laughed as he footed up the figures: he could live here a long time on what Bruce had left him. A million isn't so great a necessity after all.

Then his mind wandered back to his old life; he wondered how long it would be before he returned to it. He thought of the half-sick, indifferent way he had gone through each day, mistaking apathy for calmness, and taciturnity for thought. He stood up straight and filled

out his chest. Then he bared his arm and felt the good firm muscles. He looked in the mirror at his eyes,—clear and bright, not red and heavy as of old.

Physically there had certainly been a great improvement, and having approved of that change, he grew introspective. What had been the mental effect?

First of all he admitted that he must have improved mentally: a sound body must have some effect upon the mind. He rehearsed to himself the habits of the old days, when he had dragged himself listlessly out of bed each morning, and then dragged himself listlessly through the day. He had been active enough mentally to scheme and reason and to make some money. How had it been possible?—when he looked back upon the last ten years they appeared to his clear, rejuvenated mind like a bad dream. He had gone through them in a mental haze, buoyed up by liquor, and working, thinking and scheming like a machine, and he knew now that on that machine he had put a terrible strain, and that if he had strained it a little more it would have been wrecked,—high tension, high tension. He could sit down now and solve a problem or pursue a line of reasoning with ease; two months ago it would have left him with a racked brain and aching head.

In that maelstrom where he had lived the best years of his life, the war-cry had been money,—clean money, dirty money, bloody money even, it mattered not. He could walk past a dozen groups of men on La Salle Street any time of the day, and be sure to catch one word always, “money.” Fraternity, charity or honor were unknown words in the lexicon of that busy thoroughfare. Honesty was there, written large, but there is a difference. “How much is he worth,” a man would ask in regard to some one under discussion, and by the answer, promptly given in dollars, the absent man was weighed, measured and placed. “He is a millionaire” carried much more weight than “he is a man of ability, integrity and honor,” and yet that art of accumulation is the simplest, most common of all the arts, for proof of which we have only to observe the sort of men who master it before all other arts. Douglass remembered that on one occasion he had been opposed to an acquaintance in a wheat deal, and that the man had lost, and that when he met him on the street that afternoon he had nodded and smiled in a ghastly attempt to appear indifferent. Ten minutes later he was dead in his office, and the papers said that his family was destitute.

And as he sat there alone on Nobody's Island, a great nausea for that old fight for

useless dollars seized him. He thought with contempt of that pushing, struggling, cursing mob out in the world there, shouldering each other in a mad rush to a precipice; lying, stealing, cheating for dollars, not that they might purchase bread or fine raiment, or even woman's virtue or man's honor, but that they might make them spawn and breed, or lock them in a box and let them rust.

It was the game, not the money, in many cases. For himself, he knew it was the game: if he lost money he had been out-played, if he won, he was the best player. It was the game, and once played, no other hazard is great enough to be interesting.

But even as he turned from all these things in disgust, his mind wandered back to Bruce. He didn't care about the money, but he knew that one day he would go back and fight. He had been beaten with marked cards, and he would play again, with marked cards maybe,—it was to be dog eat dog.

As he found himself drifting into this vindictive mood, he sprang up and ran down to the beach. He would take a long row in the canoe, and forget that old life and all connected with it.

He paddled off,—he could handle a canoe as well as the next man now,—and out on the lake he began singing aloud, keeping time with

the paddle. He remembered that he had seen some water-lilies up the river; he thought he would go up and look at them now, for on the day that Lady Mary came, he wanted to get a huge bouquet and give them to her. He found the lilies, with lots of beautiful buds, and then decided that he would push on up the stream as far as he could go on a little exploring expedition. So, still singing, he sent his canoe into the river.

He soon reached the fallen logs and driftwood which blocked the stream, and after a little aimless paddling about, turned the canoe and let it drift idly toward the lake. He lighted his pipe and puffed contentedly, humming a snatch of his one song now and then, and occasionally striking the paddle into the water to keep the canoe on its course.

He was thinking with pleasant anticipation of his guests, the white-haired friend he had gained, and the girl who was so unlike all other girls, when, as he swung around a sharp bend of the stream, he heard a crackling in the brush, a deer, no doubt,—too bad he hadn't brought his rifle. He stopped the canoe quietly, fixed his eyes on the bank and listened intently.

Then from the bank, not ten feet away, a shout rang out, followed almost instantly by a shot; he felt a sharp blow on his right side as if some one had struck him there with a

rawhide whip, and looking down, saw blood pouring over his sweater. He heard another shout and a great crashing in the brush, and in another instant two men came rolling into the stream locked in each other's arms. One of the men was George; the other, torn, disheveled, bearded as he was, he knew by the little, frightened close-set eyes—Wilson. Then everything blurred before him, he half rose in the canoe, toppled heavily to one side, and sank into the stream.

* * * * *

When he recovered consciousness, he was in the cabin with George bending over him. Slowly he recalled the incidents of the afternoon.

"Am I done for?" he asked, weakly.

"No, I don't think the wound is a bad one; I have dressed it. The ball went clear through. I have been waiting for you to come to so I could go for help. I'm going at once; it's hard to leave you here alone, but it's the only way."

"How came you to be there?"

"Don't talk and I'll tell you all about it."

Then as he moved about the cabin, preparing to leave, the half-breed related what had occurred. Douglass noted that his voice was monotonous and his face expressionless, something as the voice and face of an Indian might be. He had not gone to Manitowish, but had

been watching the canoe in the woods. He had not told him of the trap-gun, nor of his vigil, as he had intended to kill the assassin out of hand and let the matter end there. Wilson had kept away from his boat, apparently suspecting something, but had been crawling toward it when he heard Douglass singing on the river. George could not see him, but had followed his movements by sound alone. He had, however, come close upon him, and caught sight of him just as he raised his arm to fire. The half-breed had uttered his shout of warning and sprung upon Wilson, but too late. They had fallen together into the stream, and when George saw Douglass sinking he loosed his hold on Wilson and dragged the wounded man to the bank. Wilson had escaped, and George had made haste to fetch Douglass to the cabin. That was all.

He finished his brief narration and his preparations for leaving at the same time. Then he came to the bed and said:

"Can you use your right arm?"

Douglass tried and found that he could.

"I've put whiskey, and water, and this revolver here on the table where you can reach them. It's Wilson's gun, he dropped it in the creek and I fished it out. He has no gun, and I'm going to stop on my way out and smash

his canoe. There's no danger, but I'm going to put the padlock on the door. I'll have help here before morning."

"I'm not afraid," Douglass said, "only hurry."

"I'm sorry I botched the job," George said.

Douglass smiled and held out his hand; his companion pressed it an instant, and was gone. Then the wounded man heard the lock snap on the door and knew he was alone.

For a long time he lay quiet, thinking. He could not understand this man's idea of revenge. He remembered reading somewhere that revenge which left the victim in ignorance whence his injury proceeded was no revenge at all. Besides, the man had first warned him out of the woods. It could not be that he wanted to possess himself of the island, for that course would point him out as the slayer. It was a riddle, and he gave up thinking about it.

An hour passed, and his body grew stiff; he tried to change his position, but a sharp pain in his side warned him to lie quiet. He knew that he must exercise all his philosophy and patience through that long night. He could move his arm freely, and he took a sip of water. The whiskey was there, too, but he would not touch that unless he grew faint.

For many long, weary hours he lay there quietly, exerting all his will-power to keep his

mind calm and as much at ease as possible. He knew that properly directed mental action goes a long way in such a case.

When he found his mind wandering to the horrors of the day, he turned it into other channels. He solved problems in mental arithmetic, tried to repeat old poems of his school days, did everything to tire his mind and keep it from morbidness and alarm. It was a hard struggle, a killing struggle, but he made it manfully, and at last, long after midnight, he fell asleep.

* * * * *

When he awakened the dawn was just breaking. His head felt hot and heavy, and his mouth was parched. He reached for the water, then, with his hand in mid-air, he paused and listened. From somewhere in the room came a sound of deep, regular breathing. He laid his hand quietly on the revolver, and listened again. The regular breathing continued; some one was asleep on the floor. He turned his head painfully and looked in the direction of the sound. Then a sense that something he had half-wished for, half anticipated, had come about, brought a smile to his face, and a sigh of relief to his heart.

It was Lady Mary.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

He spoke her name softly, and she awoke and smiled sleepily up at him; then, realizing where she was, she sprang hastily to her feet, and brushed the tumbled hair from her eyes. She came to the bed and took his extended hand in both of hers.

"I'm a poor nurse," she said; "I found you sleeping, and I lay down to rest a minute and went to sleep myself. How do you feel?"

"Better for your being here, but pretty weak."

She laid her hand on his hot forehead, and he took it feebly in his own and carried it to his lips.

"God bless you for coming, little Lady Mary. I had a feeling that you would come."

She smiled, but her eyes were wet with tears. Then she said in a low voice:

"It was my fault that you were shot."

His active mind grasped the whole situation at once; all the perplexities about Wilson were cleared away. He recalled the surly manner he had assumed on the subject of Harrison's Lake when they first met at Kaufman's. He

loved the girl, and for some reason had looked upon Douglass as a rival. First he had tried to drive him away, and then to kill him.

"I want to tell you all about it," Mary continued. "He came in on the Wild-Cat trail the day you left; he saw you kiss me, and misunderstood. He has wanted me to marry him for a year. He came to the cabin and made a scene; I was stubborn and didn't tell him he was mistaken. Then he went away, I thought for good."

Her voice broke and she covered her face with her hands.

Douglass reached up and gently drew her hands down and held both of them in his own.

"Why, Lady Mary, you can't blame yourself a bit, you mustn't think of it again. I'm going to be all right in a few days—that is, I'll promise to get well if you'll promise not to speak of the matter again."

Then swiftly it occurred to him that this madman was at large, and that if he knew of her presence there, his unreasoning jealousy might carry him to any lengths. The thought startled him.

"Where is George?" he asked. "You didn't come here alone?"

"No, George was with me. He has not spoken a word since he told me of your trouble."

Douglass breathed a sigh of relief: "Where is your Father?"

"He was in Manitowish when George came. Mac started for a doctor at once. They will all be here by this afternoon."

"Do you think they can get a doctor to come here?"

"Yes, there is a physician there who was with my Mother when she died; he has often been to the Island. I sent him a note. I am sure that he will come."

She laid her hand again upon his head.

"You have a fever; please don't talk any more. I have some medicines here."

He watched her as she moved quickly about, unstrapping the little pack she had brought in, and disposing its contents about the room. She was a woman now, the child was gone.

She fixed a draught and brought it to him; then she rearranged the pillows and handed him the medicine. He saw that her face was very sorrowful.

"I won't take the medicine, and I won't promise not to talk unless you bring Lady Mary back."

She made a brave attempt to smile and held the glass to his lips. He pushed it away.

"Will you promise?"

"Yes, anything, only please get well."

"I'll be out in a week," he said.

The medicine made him drowsy and soon he sank into a troubled sleep. He dreamed of a little, bubbling spring where, in his boyhood, he had often slaked his thirst. The spring and all its environments had been long since forgotten, but in his dream he lay at full length before it, drinking, drinking deeply, but it had no power to quench his thirst, and he woke at length, crying with parched lips for water.

Lady Mary was beside him in an instant with a glass of water in her hand; he drank it eagerly; she gave him medicine again and he felt easier, but his head was hot and heavy, and his body was racked with pain. She laid her cool hand on his forehead, and he murmured to her to keep it there.

"How long did I sleep?"

"It is three o'clock; they will be here soon. Don't talk, try to rest again."

He sank again into a stupor, muttering constantly and unintelligibly. Then he awoke suddenly and looked about him wildly. She was still by his side, and George was in the cabin. His face grew composed and he began talking to her in a low voice. She sank on her knees beside the bed, and the half-breed silently left the cabin.

She called him back in a few minutes.

"He is delirious," she said, and he saw that her face was very white.

"If a man was to die here on Nobody's Island, he'd have to be buried here; they couldn't get him out," the sick man cried. "Well, why not?"

He muttered to himself for awhile, and then laughed aloud.

"Hello, Billy Matthews," he cried. "No, I wasn't bored up in the quiet woods, and I'll agree with you, there is something bigger than a ten-dollar bill in the world. Yes,——"

He fell to muttering again, and felt about the coverlet with his right hand.

"Where the devil is that revolver? He might come here again. I'll shoot between those nasty little eyes if he does. He shan't hurt you, Lady Mary."

Then he became quiet and lay very still. The half-breed came to the bedside and looked at his face. Then he turned quickly to the girl.

"He's sinking; we must give him whiskey."

He poured a little in a glass, and she put her arm under his head and begged him to swallow it. He roused and took the whiskey, which seemed to revive him a little.

"You must keep giving it to him a little at a time; don't let him grow unconscious. I'm going out on the trail and see if I can hurry them. If I meet them I'll call to you."

"Yes, go," she cried.

For an hour she knelt there beside him, her arm under his head, reviving him with the whiskey. She saw with terror that he was growing weaker, and that the liquor had less and less effect. She talked to him, begging him to hold up for a little longer, but he made no answer now.

Another hour of alternate sinking and rallying, and she drew her breath with a great sob: the whiskey was almost gone. Then, far away in the woods, she heard a long shout. They were coming.

She gave him the last of the whiskey, and implored him to try to hold himself together. He smiled feebly, and tried to answer her, but the words were unintelligible. Then he lapsed into unconsciousness again. There was a look on his quiet face which she could not mistake. She grew very calm then, and sat there, waiting, with her eyes on his face. Her lips did not move, but her heart repeated one word, hurry, hurry, hurry.

She heard the quick beat of feet upon the path, and as the three men came into the room, she rose, swayed a little, and fell into her father's arms.

The doctor, a tall, raw-boned, bearded man, more like a woodsman than a physician, moved quickly to the bedside, took one glance at Douglass' face, picked up the nerveless hand,

and without a moment's hesitation took a hypodermic needle from his case and sent its contents into the wounded man's arm.

Mary recovered quickly and came at once to the bedside.

"What have you given him?" the doctor asked.

"Whiskey."

"Good, it has saved his life. That is, it may have saved it. All of you get out of here now; your presence will only excite him. Close the door and darken the window. Harrison, go to sleep,—you, too, Mary. I don't want to have too many patients on this island."

Mary looked at him appealingly. His rugged face softened and he said gently:

"I can't tell anything for a while."

Then they all obediently left the doctor and his patient alone.

* * * * *

A few hours later the big man came out of the darkened room. Harrison was sleeping quietly upon the floor; George had disappeared. Mary came to him instantly, and he took both her hands in his.

"It's all right, baby," he said, "I'm going to pull him through." Then his rough face crinkled into a smile, and he looked at her shrewdly from beneath his bushy eyebrows, "I'm going to pull him through for you."

She made no pretense of misunderstanding him, but said:

"You are mistaken; he is our friend,—nothing more; but I am so glad and so grateful to you."

"All right, all right. Wouldn't have come for any one but the baby. Now I want a pan of cold water. George,—where's that George?"

But George was not to be found.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PROBLEM.

Under the skilful ministrations of his physician and nurse, Douglass recovered rapidly. His wound was an ugly one, but the greatest danger had been from the fever, and his weakened condition from loss of blood. Within a week he was able to sit propped up in bed, and talk freely with his friends. About this time the doctor took his leave.

Mac, who had come in with some food supplies the day after their timely arrival, was to escort the woodsman-doctor back to Manitowish. Harrison, who was unremitting in his efforts to entertain and cheer the bed-ridden man, gave Mac a long list of books, papers, and delicacies to fetch with him on the return trip.

"It's only a question of two or three weeks now till you'll be as good as new," the doctor said. "You can thank the little girl here that I came in, or that I was of any use when I got here, for that matter."

Douglass held out his hand. "I'm thanking all of you every hour," he said earnestly. Then after a little awkward silence he continued

with a touch of huskiness in his voice: "I've lived in a different world from this of yours all my life. I don't believe I ever knew what generous, disinterested people there were on earth. God bless you all."

He saw that they were all embarrassed by his speech, but he was glad he had made it. No more was said on either side, and after leaving some instructions as to medicine and diet, the doctor left him.

Harrison resumed the story he was reading to the sick man, and Mary went about her household affairs.

Douglass had observed during his convalescence that Lady Mary was still a woman, the child had never returned. She was cheerful, pleasant, helpful, but a little reserved, and sometimes, he imagined, a trifle sad. He puzzled over her demeanor; the change was apparently not perceptible to any one but him. He wondered if she was embarrassed because she had shown so much solicitude for him while they were alone.

He called her to the bedside when they were alone in the room one day and said:

"What's become of that little Lady Mary who was always laughing and singing?"

She smiled brightly and left her hand in his.

"Why, here she is, a little older, a little more subdued perhaps, because of the trouble

her friend has had, but very, very happy that he is getting well again."

"Getting well because of you," he said.

"I am so glad that I knew what to do, and that I could do it."

"I was conscious part of the time, and I'll never forget those long hours you knelt by my bed with your arm about my neck and kept death away."

She blushed hotly; he saw it, and said quickly:

"You don't feel embarrassed about that, Lady Mary?"

"Oh no, no," she said hastily. "I did what I could just as I would have done it for my Father."

The reply did not please Douglass very well; he felt a little twinge at his heart-strings, but said nothing more.

She stood for a moment looking at him curiously, then she withdrew her hand from his and went about her duties.

* * * * *

One strange thing had occurred on Nobody's Island: George had not returned after his sudden disappearance following the arrival of Harrison and the doctor. Douglass felt sure that he was again watching in the woods, but could not understand why he did not put in

an occasional appearance. Mac was interrogated as to the probable whereabouts of his companion, and after mature deliberation said briefly: "He has went away," a statement so obvious as not to be considered important.

* * * * *

The few books about the cabin were soon exhausted. Harrison did not read them all; he had a rare faculty for choosing what he knew was interesting to his hearer, and leaving out the rest. Also, Douglass preferred his conversation to the reading, and would frequently ask his opinion on some question to start him talking. He was sure of something out of the accepted line. One day Douglass sounded him on the occult, and he replied:

"What is the use of trying to explain that which is inexplicable? There are many simpler things which we do not understand, the investigation of which brings keen pleasure. A great many wonderful minds have been seriously handicapped through this striving for the unattainable." He picked up a volume of Poe's works: "Here is a great instance of what I just said. Edgar Allan Poe possessed one of the most remarkably logical minds of which we have any record. An error in analysis or logic was at once apparent to him. Take, for example, 'The Mystery of Marie Roget,' in

which he takes a number of newspaper articles anent an actual murder, and shows up such a mass of contorted logic and ridiculous reasoning as to make the story actually appear humorous. Then he proceeds to give a solution of the mystery, a solution which was afterwards found to be correct in every detail. This, remember, was an actual occurrence, not a tale, although his deductions appear in the form of a story. And yet this man shows through all his works a wild, half-mad striving for an understanding of what is not within the scope of the human mind, a defect which has rather marred than beautified his works, and certainly made him very unhappy. He looked upon a tree, and was not content to rest in its shade, nor even to stop at such details of its growth and development as can be examined and understood,—he wanted to know what its life germ was; he never found out. His unreasoning ambition ruined him, or at least handicapped him seriously for useful work. Imagine the sublime egotism of a man who tries to understand, for example, the duration of time, or the extent of space. He wastes his time and life in useless effort.”

* * * * *

The fifth day after the physician's departure Mac returned. He brought, among other

things, a bundle of newspapers; one of them a Chicago daily, and as Douglass opened it, his eye fell on a pictured face he knew well—a face with cold, gray eyes, and a slit for a mouth. He rapidly read the text which accompanied the picture. Bruce was in Chicago running a deal in wheat. After re-reading the article carefully, he laid the paper aside and fell into a brown study. For an hour he did not move except to fill his pipe. The mood and the intent expression of his face were the same as on that day when he had sat in his office and studied the tape. But there was something else in his thoughts now, something which helped him to arrive at a decision. At length, he said half-aloud, "I'll do it; everything considered, it's probably the best thing to do."

That evening he said to Harrison:

"What do you think about speculation?"

"Do you mean the moral or financial aspect?"

"Financial. What are the requisites of success?"

"It is a subject to which I have given a good deal of study, and from a practical standpoint I am tolerably well equipped to answer you. I followed speculation as a business for many years. I should say that the prime requisites were patience and thought. Speculators, as a rule, are not patient, and they sel-

dom think correctly. The great army of venturers are imbued with the idea that the market is a machine, and spend their time studying its past action on the theory that it may be expected to repeat its performances."

Douglass asked several other questions, and knew from Harrison's replies that he understood the subject thoroughly. He had opened the matter for the purpose of disclosing his plans in regard to Bruce, and this he presently did.

He told the story of his deal in Rope and its outcome, and ended by stating that as soon as he was able to travel he intended to return to Chicago and try conclusions with the man again.

When he had heard the story, Harrison was silent for a time. Then he said:

"I am sorry to hear of this, partly for selfish reasons; we have grown to enjoy your company very much. Aside from that, I fear that even victory will give little pleasure, and on the other hand you have many chances for loss. As I understand it, you are going after revenge rather than money."

"Yes, I have begun to look upon money as less important than heretofore. I am determined to play the game once more, however. He is on my ground now, I was on his before."

"Is he not in a position to crush you by mere preponderance of capital? If he finds you opposed to him could he not consider his own possibilities improved?"

"Suppose I trade on his own side, parallel his own operations?"

"He would certainly find you a hindrance, and in that event he could dispose of you and fortify his own position by working against himself temporarily."

Douglass laughed. "That is all very true, but I intend concealing my operations from him."

"Change places with him; could he conceal his from you?"

"No, I don't think he could; that's a fact."

"You are on the dangerous ground of underestimating his intellectual powers. If you are to outwit such a man as I assume this Bruce to be, you must be very careful."

"Thank you for the suggestion. Perhaps my plans are rather too simple. I shall study it over. I think, however, I have analyzed *his* plans to the letter."

"That will be a great help, but again, be very careful. The end of possibilities, the logical conclusion, is sometimes very obscure."

"I do not think that I have overlooked any possibilities."

Harrison reflected a few minutes, and then said:

"Let me divert you for a moment, and incidentally show you how far away the last analysis may be. You have seen the game played with dice in which one player casts two dice, and then casts again for the number to repeat. If it repeats he has won; if the uppermost spots total seven he loses. What are his chances?"

Douglass figured for a time, and replied:

"Why, I had never studied the matter, but I see now that seven would appear more frequently than any other number."

"Exactly; it is possible to make seven in six different ways, and the chances of all other numbers decrease each way from seven. Two, for example, can be made in but one way, and the same is true of twelve. Now I will ask you another question. Suppose you are casting with two dice and throw two sixes twice, what are your chances for throwing sixes at the third attempt?"

"Why, exactly what they were at the beginning; the dice are inanimate things."

"Now you have made my illustration of logical conclusions for me. You have answered as ninety-nine intelligent men out of a hundred answer. You have followed the question just so far as it is obvious and provable, and your

last analysis leaves you in a dangerous error. The chances of casting sixes on the third attempt are greatly reduced."

"You surprise me."

"Let me reverse the question: Suppose you cast twice for sixes, unsuccessfully, have your chances for making them on the third cast been increased?"

"I do not think so."

"Will you admit that sixes will appear *some time*?"

"Certainly."

"How do you reconcile that admission with the belief that you have just expressed, that each unsuccessful cast brings you no nearer the *some time* when they will appear."

"Harrison," Douglass said, "you make my head ache."

Harrison laughed. "I only want to show you the danger of a last analysis where you are pitted against a very brainy man. The proposition I have just placed before you, you will be able to see for yourself if you give it careful thought, but if your attention had not been directed to it, you would have been positive of your former last analysis."

"Has the question of the dice ever been agreed upon by logicians? I cannot yet believe the view correct."

"Oh, yes, it is in no way original with me. The man we have recently discussed as a great logician uses the same question to illustrate the pertinacity in error of a certain class of thinkers. It was he, in fact, who first directed my attention to the question."

He picked up the volume of Poe from the table and read:

"'Nothing is more difficult than to convince the merely general reader that the fact of sixes having been thrown twice in succession by a player at dice is good cause for betting the largest odds that sixes will not be thrown in a third attempt. A suggestion to this effect is usually rejected by the intellect at once. It does not appear that the two throws which have been completed and which now lie absolutely in the past, can have influence on the throw which exists only in the future. The chances for throwing sixes seems to be precisely as they were at any ordinary time; that is to say, subject only to the influence of the various other throws which may be made by the dice. And this is a reflection which *appears* so exceedingly obvious that attempts to controvert it are received more frequently with a derisive smile than with anything like respectful attention. The error here involved, a gross error redolent with mischief, I cannot pretend to expose within the limits assigned to me at

present. With the philosophical it needs no exposure. It forms one of an infinite series of mistakes which arise in the path of reason through her propensity for seeking the truth in detail.' ”

Harrison laid the book aside, and concluded: “Now, I think I have proved that a logical conclusion is sometimes rather illogical.”

“I wish I could have your assistance on this deal. It would be a grand game to check-mate him.”

“That is impossible,” Harrison said. “I am away from speculation forever, it has no attraction for me. Our discussion leads up to one point, however, the man who plays the deepest game wins; and in the world of *haute finance*, he must needs play very deep sometimes.”

Douglass picked up the paper, read some passages from the market news aloud, and commented on them, then he handed the paper to Harrison. He took it, and as his eyes fell on Bruce's face, he gave a start of surprise.

“Is this the man you are to campaign against?” he asked.

“Yes; do you know him?”

“No,” Harrison answered slowly, “no, I do not know him,” and made no further comment.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOTHER'S BLOOD.

It was on the first day that Douglass was out of bed that George returned. He came in late in the afternoon; his clothes were in tatters, his face haggard, his frame emaciated, and his whole aspect that of a man who has undergone severe privations and hardships. They all looked at him aghast as he walked into the cabin and hung his rifle on the hook. He turned and spoke briefly.

"I have been lost in the woods." Then to Mary, "Will you please give me something to eat?"

She hastened to set food before him, and he ate ravenously. The men forebore to question him till he had finished eating. Even then Harrison said very little, looking at the half-breed shrewdly as he told his story.

He had gone for a deer, and finding the sign, had followed it into the woods, **and** had been lost. He had wandered about trying to find a trail, but had only gone deeper into the forest. At last, he got his bearings, and found his way back. As he returned very brief replies to all the inquiries, Douglass felt that he was embarrassed over the apparent reflection on his woodcraft, and let the matter rest.

George soon left the cabin, and outside, threw himself upon the ground and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

A little later Harrison came upon him as he lay there asleep, and stood looking down into his face. It was a contented face, worn and haggard as it was, and it was the face of an Indian.

"The Mother's blood," Harrison said softly to himself, and walked away.

* * * * *

Harrison told Douglass that night that he would prepare to return to his own cabin the next day.

"You have George with you now, and you will be as well as ever in a short time," he said.

"Yes, as much as I regret to see you go, I know that you have already sacrificed your own comfort for me. I hope our next meeting will be under more favorable circumstances."

"I trust it will be. I am glad we were able to reach you in time. You will stop with us a few days on your way out?"

"Yes, I had intended inviting myself."

"I have been reflecting on the matter of which we spoke the other night, and have decided to help you in your campaign against Bruce; that is, if you are still of the same mind." Then noting the look of surprise on Douglass' face,

he continued: "I have reasons for my change of attitude. I may disclose them to you some day; for the present I prefer to keep them to myself. I will take these papers with me and study the matter in detail. Then when you stop with us we will compare notes and see if we can formulate a plan to outwit him."

Douglass accepted the offer unconditionally. He was, in truth, surprised, as Harrison was not a man to change his mind without good reason. But he asked no questions. He was very glad that Harrison was to lend his assistance, as he had grown to have great respect for his powers."

At the beach the next morning, Douglass bade them adieu with a heavy heart. They were his best, his only friends. He wrung Harrison's hand and said, "I'm not going to try to tell you both how grateful I am—I could never do it."

Then he turned to Mary, and taking both her hands, said:

"Lady Mary, I'm afraid I brought you the first trouble you ever knew, and I'm sorry for that, but for all your loving kindness, you will have, always, my deepest gratitude and my dearest love."

She said in a low voice that she was glad she could help him, and very, very glad that he was well again; and they left him.

At the entrance to the portage they turned and waved their hands to him, and he remembered that she had made him that same gesture of farewell a few weeks before, and thinking of that other parting, and all the things which had occurred in that brief period, he realized, with a pang, that this time she had not offered him her innocent face to kiss.

* * * * *

In the succeeding winter, one day, a half dozen rough men were standing about the stove in the Manitowish store listening to a harrowing tale told by one of their number.

"Yes, gents," he said, "I've been in these here woods a many a day, an' naturally I've seen queer things, an' fur as that goes, I've seen dead men in the timber before, but this here deceased I'm tellin' you about kinder rattled me. I come on him onexpected, an' of course that stops you pretty short; but that aint all; as I said, I've seen dead men before, but this here deceased——"

"Well, what about him?" one of the listeners asked impatiently.

"Why, gents," said the woodsman, rubbing his hand slowly over his stubby chin, "believe it or not, this here particular deceased had been scalped."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE KING HOLDS COUNCIL WITH HIMSELF.

"It is now three months since I left Chicago to recuperate my shattered health and learn to quit drinking too much whiskey; I expected to be bored to death, but I haven't been, and I guess everything that has happened to me has been for the best.

"I've made two or three friends, the dearest I ever had. Even this half-breed is more to me than any one back there in the world I left. I've lived and had new experiences and taken an interest in everything and learned a lot; particularly that money isn't everything,—that it isn't even much of anything. I've been shot, it's true, but that don't matter, and I've fallen in love, and that matters a great deal.

"Yes, that's the worst part of it,—the only bad part of it, and yet, if I could cancel that hopeless love by the expression of a word, I don't think I'd do it.

"I've always believed that love was a good deal of a phantasy, a thing for poets to write about and dreamers to dream about. I've analyzed the grand passion in my philosophical moods, and always wound up by deciding that

it was moonshine, or money, or something worse, and now all my sophistry has fallen in a wreck about me,—I'm in love. Real love, pure love, honorable love, hopeless love.

"Yes, I love her, soul and body. I love her clean mind and her honest heart, her pure innocence and her unselfish nature. And I love her hair and her eyes and her lips, and the shoes upon her little feet, and the belt around her waist. If I could throw away the world and all ambition, enterprise or wealth, and have her for my very own, I would give them up willingly, eagerly.

"I suppose if I was to stay here, or better still, come back again, and use the wiles I've learned out in the world, I might erect in her young heart an effigy of love, I might win her. I might even make her happy by concealing from her the knowledge of what the heart can really feel.

"But that would never do. I wouldn't rob her that way, and, anyhow, it would be dead sea fruit for me, perhaps for both.

"I'm not an old man yet, and if the disparity of years was all that lay between us, the chasm might be bridged. If her young heart had gone out to me as mine has to her, I don't believe that would mean very much to either of us. But it didn't, and there's an end of it. She looks upon me as a friend, and for the rest, her own

lips framed the words,—‘I did it as I would have done it for my Father.’

“I am not quite clear why her manner changed after the others came; it was a slight change, but I could see it. I wonder if she was woman enough and wise enough to read the secret in my eyes as I lay there, and, seeing it, was woman enough and wise enough to set me in my place gently, delicately. Well, no matter, if she has guessed, it can’t be helped; if not, she will never know that my heart is yearning, breaking, crying out for her, the one, only one.

“That’s all there is to it. I’ve gone the pace as hard as most men; if there’s anything bad in the world I haven’t done, it’s because I didn’t have the chance, or because I overlooked something. But in this one thing, I’m going to play fair. She shall never know.

“And because I want to make it as easy for myself as I can, I’m going to run away. I’m going back among those slow-moving men with the pitiless hearts and greedy hands, and play the game of dollars again. I don’t know whether I’ll ever let whiskey get the better of me again or not. I don’t care anything about Bruce, I don’t care about anything but her, but I will entertain myself, and maybe him for awhile. It will be a diversion to make him sit up and look around, and if I make money, I’ll

get what pleasure I can out of it, and if I lose, it can go and be damned to it.

“But no matter what comes to me, nor what goes from me, no matter what my life may be, I’ll always hold her pure image in my heart. No matter where life’s vicissitudes may lead me, I will say ‘God bless her’ every night when I lie down to sleep, and no one, she least of all, will ever know that a heavy penalty has been exacted for my years of scoffing and sacrilege.”

And having said these things to himself, the King of Nobody’s Island rose from his chair, knocked the cold ashes from his pipe, heaved a sigh or two, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO OLD GRAY RATS.

Bruce sat in his office in the Chicago Board of Trade, absorbed in the intricacies of a wilderness of figures. The perusal seemed to be satisfactory, and having completed it, he turned to his partner, another heavy, hard-faced man who sat cracking his knuckles and staring out the window.

"Curtis," Bruce said, "did you settle with Floyd today?"

Curtis did not answer at once. He always studied his replies to see if he could not find something disappointing to say. He was always looking on the dark side of things, and always making money.

"No," he said at length, "I didn't settle with him."

"Well, he'll settle in the open market tomorrow then. That is, he'll buy his short wheat. What was the matter with him?"

"He said he wouldn't pay 90 cents for his line, thought it would go lower."

Bruce grinned. "He'll pay 95," he said, "and that will break him."

"He said," Curtis continued, "that he had involved every thing he had, and that on the last

call for margins, he mortgaged his home, and that his wife was nearly crazy, and that he just couldn't give up while there was a chance. He wanted me to let him out at 85, what do you think of that?"

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him we weren't running an eleemosynary institution."

Bruce grinned again. "That's a good word, that ought to have fixed him. What about Campbell?"

"He settled."

"Well, we won't let any more of them settle. Let them buy their wheat in the open market."

"We don't want any failures, nor runaway markets," Curtis said; "too much selling in the Northwest on these bulges, and too much public opinion when a man busts."

"So far as the cash wheat in the Northwest is concerned," Bruce replied, "we've got to expect that, and may as well take it now as at higher prices. Every one thinks we'll run a corner, but when September comes I won't have a bushel of wheat. No corner for me."

"Nor for me either. I've been around this Board for twenty years and never saw but one corner successful. How's your friend Douglass getting on?"

"Mr. Douglass," said Bruce, "has just about as much intelligence as I gave him credit for when I met him in New York. I seldom make a mistake in my judgment of a man. I have been on the lookout for him ever since I came here to run this deal. I naturally inferred that he would think he had me at a disadvantage because I was in Chicago playing his old game, and would take a crack at me. And so it turns out. He is here with an elaborate scheme to deceive me and make me think he is buying wheat. He argues that if I find him on the same side of the market as I am, I will shake him out. So he carefully sells twice as much wheat as he buys. He puts the transactions he wishes to conceal in the names of his lieutenants, and makes his purchases openly. Even if I did not know exactly what he has done, I would have surmised it. That game might deceive some men, but not me."

"I saw him on the street today, he don't look very happy," Curtis said.

"He has about three hundred thousand loss, and his bank balance is, um-um, let me see."

The manipulator rummaged about the desk and produced a slip of paper; "His bank balance is just one hundred and ninety thousand. He has a line of three million short wheat, over and above his own purchases."

"Six or seven cents advance would put him out of business."

Bruce smiled grimly. "It would and will, I shall advance wheat to 97 cents for his special benefit."

"That will bring some selling from the cash wheat points."

"I know it, but, as I said, that contingency would have to be met anyway if we are to run this wheat higher. There are some speculative lines up there, too, in St. Paul and Duluth. After I get through with my friend Douglass I'll give those northwestern gentlemen a little shaking up."

"You say he has three million bushels short?"

Bruce took another memorandum from his desk, "Here it is," he said; "he sold two million bushels around 82. This sale he made through a man named Matthews, a lawyer. They met in a North Side saloon two weeks ago, and the next day this Matthews began selling wheat. I had him investigated and find that he is an old friend of Douglass. Around 83 he sold another two million through a doctor named Graves; he called him in to attend him as a physician, and the next day Graves began selling wheat. I had Graves investigated, and find that he has been Douglass' family physician for many years. All the time that this has been going on he has pretended to be bullish on

wheat, and has given numerous orders on the buying side. All together, he has now about a million bought, and four million sold. His present loss is just a trifle under \$300,000."

"You keep pretty close tab on him."

"Yes, I don't know as it was really necessary, as I doubt whether his operations would have interfered with our campaign very much, but he made a boast a few months ago that he would be even with me; and I think enough of the game to step out of my way to show him how much he has under-valued my perspicuity."

"Well," said Curtis moodily, "it was a pretty slick scheme; anybody but you would have fallen into the trap."

Bruce smiled heavily: "He has never met a man, nor visited a place since I saw him on the street two weeks ago, but that I have known all that transpired. I have seen copies of every telegram that he has received; I know how much money he has in bank, and I know how much he gave Graves and Matthews to sell wheat with. He took elaborate precautions about the money, drew it out of the bank in cash, and put it in a safe deposit box for a day or two, then gave it to them in currency and they deposited it to their own credits.

He might have got some one else to do the selling, some one you couldn't connect him with," mused Curtis.

"Men don't trust any one but intimate friends with so much money and such a secret," Bruce retorted. "Besides, if a large sum of money had been withdrawn from his bank account, and had not shown up in the hands of some one I could connect with him, I would have scanned every new trader till I laid my finger on his operations. I can tell you within a hundred thousand bushels how every trader in the market stands. I know who is long and who is short, and if they know where we stand, I'm deceived. It wouldn't matter anyway."

"When are you going after him?" Curtis asked.

"This is Tuesday; wheat closed $90\frac{1}{2}$ today; I'll put it to $92\frac{1}{2}$ tomorrow, then give him a chance to get his margins up, and put it to $93\frac{1}{2}$. He can't margin above 97, and Friday they'll call him three cents a bushel. He won't have much left in his bank account Saturday, for on Saturday wheat will close at 97."

"You won't let him bust on us! That would be a bad thing, I'm afraid, with as big a line as his."

"I've thought of all that," Bruce said shortly. "I'll call him into the office Saturday afternoon and tell him how much wheat he's got, and

how much money he's got, and let him settle at 97 cents."

The old man's eyes glowered, and he struck his knee softly but meaningly with his clenched fist: "He goes away from here, to God knows where, to rest, and while he's resting he hatches up a great scheme to beat me at my own game. He thinks he has concealed his operations from me. I'll have the pleasure of showing him that I know more about him than he knows about himself." Curtis sighed. "Oh, well, we'll get *him* all right; I hope we get 'em *all*." Then he sighed again, and took his leave for the day.

As Curtis left the office, a little ferret-eyed man entered, and stood silently and respectfully near the door. Bruce beckoned him to approach, and he came up and handed him some folded, typewritten sheets.

"Where is he now, Sanders?" Bruce asked.

"Gone to his room; sitting there reading. I've got a man on the outside, and his own servant, you know, is one of us."

"All right, that's all."

The man withdrew, and Bruce scanned the typewritten pages. They contained a report of every movement Douglass had made during the day and the preceding evening. When he had examined them, Bruce folded them carefully and placed them in his desk.

"That's all well enough," he said to himself, "but it's only a confirmation of what I already knew. Mr. Douglass don't seem to understand that the really shrewd man works more on what his reason tells him than on what he is able to discover."

CHAPTER XX.

THE GAME.

Douglass walked slowly along La Salle Street, lost in thought, paying no heed to the busy throng that surged by him. He had made an engagement to meet Matthews in an obscure restaurant on the North Side for the purpose of giving him more money to deposit as margin on the wheat he had sold through him. It was Friday afternoon, and wheat had advanced that day to 94 cents. He knew that the brokers who had sold the wheat for Matthews and Dr. Graves would be clamoring for more margins, and he carried the money in his pocket to supply them.

Strange as it may appear, his thoughts were not occupied with his transactions, nor his financial condition. He was thinking of Nobody's Island, and the clear air of the woods, and of Lady Mary. He had only been away from them a few weeks, but the whole experience seemed like a dream now. How much it had changed his heart and his mind, he alone knew. "After a man gets used to the woods and the hills," Kaufman had said, "they're always calling to him when he goes away." It was true,—they were calling to him already.

He stopped once on his way to the appointed meeting place and took a drink of whiskey. He did not drink much as yet, but he knew that the old habit was slowly coming back. He made no effort to combat it. His appetite was still good, but he knew it would not be long till he reached the old basis.

At the meeting place he found Matthews awaiting him. The lawyer's face was troubled, and he looked haggard, as one who has need of sleep. "Doug," he said when they had seated themselves, "I'm in this thing with you, and I'll go through with it, but I wouldn't be a financier again for anything in the world. I'm not built for it."

Douglass laughed. "It's an old game with me," he said. "How much did they call you for?"

"Sixty thousand dollars. That fellow has been at me three times since two o'clock."

Douglass took a roll of money from his pocket and counted out the amount in thousand-dollar bills.

"Inconvenient way to handle it," he said, "but I've got to conceal things."

Matthews pocketed the money, and shifted nervously in his chair.

"I don't want to worry you, Doug, but I must tell you that I've got a suspicion I'm being followed. Of course, I may be mistaken,

but I've seen the same man too often of late. This thing means so much to you, don't you think it possible that your opponent is on to your game?"

"No," Douglass said, "I've used every possible precaution. You and I have never been actually seen together since I returned. He can't find out everything."

"Well, I hope you're right, but I'm worried as much as if the money was my own."

Douglass laid his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder. "Don't you worry, Billy. If it don't pan out, it's all right. It's a good game anyway. I think it will be ended one way or the other tomorrow."

"I hope it comes your way, but I'm dubious, some way. But of course I don't understand it."

"All right, Billy, we'll see. I'm going to cut this visit short, I've got another man to see. After it's all over I'll describe the whole situation to you."

Douglass took his leave, and Matthews remained in the private room for half an hour. He looked around suspiciously when he came out, but there was no sign of the man he suspected of shadowing him. With a feeling of relief he made his way to his office.

Douglass returned to his apartments; and shortly after his arrival, Dr. Graves drove up.

He alighted from his stanhope with his satchel in hand, and went to Douglass' room.

A transaction similar to that with Matthews took place. Graves was not nervous; he knew the way such men as Douglass gambled, and made no comment. He asked a few questions as to what should be said to the broker who had been importuning him to reduce his large line of wheat.

"Don't you pay any attention to him," Douglass replied. "Tell him you know what you're doing."

"Which I don't," Graves interpolated.

"It looks to a man up a tree as if I didn't either," Douglass said with a laugh.

"Now, I've got something unpleasant to say, John," Graves went on; "I've half a notion I'm being watched. There has been a little sharp-eyed rascal in a cab at my heels three or four times of late. It may be a coincidence, but it don't look right. I thought I ought to tell you."

"That's bad; Matthews said the same thing."

"Does your success depend on the effectual concealment of your plan?"

"Not absolutely, but pretty nearly so. There are some things I wanted him to know, so he would figure wrong on my position. It wouldn't do for him to know too much. I would have diversified this line more, but you and Billy

were the only ones I could trust absolutely with the secret and the money."

"From what I can gather by the newspapers, this Bruce could easily put the price higher if he wanted to."

"Yes, he has the situation well in hand: Bruce is the market, he can juggle it around as he likes, but sometimes that kind of business is expensive. If he should run wheat to a dollar, for instance, there would be a lot of selling, and if he was to keep the price at one dollar, he'd have to take about all that was offered at that figure. He's had to do some pretty big buying today to put the price up."

"Well, I hope you'll come out all right. Don't dwell too much on what I said about being followed; it may be a mare's nest."

"All right," Douglass said, as he bade the old man good-day, "I won't worry about it."

After Dr. Graves had gone, he went to the buffet and helped himself to a drink. Then he sat down at the table and filled a sheet with figures. When he had completed his calculations, he drummed idly on the table with his fingers for a time, and his eyes began to take on a sorrowful, far-away look. Then he recalled himself sharply, and took up the memorandum again, saying half aloud: "I've got just \$8,000 in the bank, and I'm margined to 97 cents. I wonder how much the old fox knows."

CHAPTER XXI.

DOG EAT DOG AGAIN.

Bruce had stated that he would carry the price of wheat to 97 cents on Saturday; he kept his word, he had been compelled to buy more wheat than he really wanted at such high prices, but he was a stubborn man at times, and in this instance he had determined to make an end of Douglass once and for all.

After he had finished the routine work of the day, he sat thinking for a while, then in his small, crabbed chirography, indited a note to Douglass asking him to call at his office at seven o'clock that evening. He made the hour late because he wished to be alone and undisturbed. He had suffered some inconvenience and monetary loss in his campaign against Douglass, and he wanted to gloat over him quietly.

When Douglass received the missive, he flushed a little and tore the note slowly to pieces, but after a little reflection, penned an answer in which he agreed to be on hand at the appointed time. Bruce read the answer with a grim smile, and handed it to Curtis.

"He's not so independent when he's broke," he said.

"No, it takes the starch out of a man to lose his money," Curtis replied. "Never saw a man yet that wouldn't kneel down when his pockets were empty."

* * * * *

At seven o'clock Douglass walked into Bruce's private office and seated himself. The scene reminded him of that day he had called on him in New York. The manipulator did not turn nor notice him in any way, but went on with his work. Douglass reflected that the man was not very versatile; he had the same insolent way with him now as before. But he sat patiently waiting for him to finish, and meanwhile studied the man's face curiously.

Bruce turned to him at length and eyed him coldly.

"I sent for you, Mr. Douglass," he said, "to give you a chance to settle on that line of short wheat you have."

Douglass answered without any change in his calm face, but his words were hard and cold:

"Since when, Mr. Bruce, did you take charge of my business?"

"It is my business now," Bruce answered, with no show of anger. "You are in a position where you cannot margin your trades, and that means that on Monday three million bushels of wheat will be bought in the open market for

your account. I could sell it to you then if I chose, or I could make you pay a dollar for it, and you would be bankrupt."

"And you don't want a runaway market, nor you don't want to appear as a seller of wheat," Douglass said.

"That is exactly the case; I am doing you a kindness, and protecting myself at the same time. No use multiplying words about it, you know the situation as well as I do. If you don't want to buy the wheat of me at 97, you can buy it Monday in the open market."

"It seems to me that I ought to know the situation a little *better* than you do."

"Well, you *don't* know it any better." He took a sheet of figures from a pigeon-hole and laid them on the desk before him.

"You have tonight two million bushels of wheat short through Rose & Co., in the name of William Matthews. You have an additional two million short through Kendall Bros., in the name of L. C. Graves. That makes four million bushels, and it averages you about 82½ cents. You also have one million bushels bought in your own name at about 85. That leaves you three millions short."

"Well?"

"Well," Bruce said slowly, "you've got \$8,000 in bank to protect it with, and that won't protect it."

"It seems to me you're taking a good many liberties with my private affairs."

"Would you like to know why?"

"Yes."

"You came to me in New York a few months ago and accused me of bad faith in the deal in Rope,—"

"Yes, and you didn't deny it, you couldn't; you simply said it was a game of dog eat dog."

"I'm not going over that ground again. At that time you threatened to be even with me. That was a weakness to begin with; if you had kept still you might have done it, but I was on my guard. I saw you on the street two weeks ago, and I set about following your movements. You see how well I have done it."

"And you bid wheat up to 97 cents today for my special benefit?"

"I don't say I did or I didn't! The market speaks for itself; wheat closed at 97 cents."

"Well, is that all?"

"That's all. I may give you a word of advice, however: The plan you laid to deceive me fell to the ground simply because you underestimated my intelligence. The whole scheme was apparent to me at once. Before I ever set about finding out what you were doing and where you stood, I surmised your plan. Never make the mistake of thinking your opponent a fool,—unless he is. That's all; do you want

to take in your three million short wheat at 97 or not?"

"I have no short wheat," Douglass answered coolly.

Bruce sneered. "Your friends have,—it's all the same thing."

"No, my friends haven't. I've been long of wheat all the way up. I sold two million bushels of my long line today; you took it off my hands at 97 cents. That cleans me up, I haven't got a bushel of wheat one way or the other."

There was that in the voice and manner of Douglass which caused Bruce's mind to misgive him. If this should be true, he had been fooled to the top of his bent. He concealed his apprehensions, however, and said shortly:

"Very well, the interview is at an end," and turned to his desk.

"Oh no, it isn't," Douglass said fiercely. "It isn't at an end by a damned sight, as you will soon find out. You got me up here to crow over me in that stagey way of yours; I told you in New York that you were a play-actor. Well, I'll have my say now. Never think your opponent is a fool, you say; that's what you've been doing yourself, and I've made a monkey of you just as I promised I would. Everything you knew, everything you found out about my affairs, I knew you would find out. I gauged

your intellect exactly. I was afraid sometimes your sleuths wouldn't find out enough. I've been long of wheat all the way up through a friend in St. Paul; you've had a lot of trouble with him, and I've made a million dollars of your money. You find I am quits, Mr. Bruce!"

Bruce knew it was the truth, knew he was beaten. His face, usually so expressionless, lowered with anger and hatred, but he could find no words to fit the case. Like many another man in a similar situation, he had not the courage to acknowledge defeat, so he said in a tense voice:

"Do you expect me to believe this magnificent fairy story? I know you have that three million wheat short."

"Of course you do," Douglass jeered, "and I've got three million long through your own brokers to offset it. The two transactions will be rung up against each other Monday."

"I'll believe it when I see it."

"You're going to see it right now," Douglass answered, stepping to the door. He motioned to an occupant of the outer office, who entered quietly. It was Harrison.

"Mr. Harrison," Douglas said, "Mr. Bruce doubts, or pretends to doubt that I've got three million long wheat in St. Paul. Will you convince him?"

Harrison drew some statements from his pocket and laid them on Bruce's desk.

"There are Mr. Douglass' transactions," he said. "I think you will find them correct."

Bruce glanced at them, and knew at once that what Douglass had told him was the truth. The mask dropped entirely now, and his face was distorted with anger. "I knew you didn't have the wit to do it," he said; "this man was your instructor."

Douglass laughed harshly. "Even so," he said, "all honor where honor is due. We beat you at your own game, and that's good enough for me."

Bruce turned to his desk again. "I'll promise you you haven't seen the end of me," he muttered.

"That's a weakness,—never make threats," Douglass quoted.

"Before we leave you, Mr. Bruce," Harrison said in his level voice, "I wish to explain my part in the matter."

Bruce whirled in his chair. He was consumed with anger, and this interloper, with his quiet air, maddened him more than Douglass with his open exultation.

"I don't care anything about you or your part in the matter," he said savagely, "and I don't want to hear any more from either of you."

"You are going to hear what I have to say whether you like it or not," Harrison answered.

He did not stir nor raise his voice, but there was that in his eyes and tone which commanded silence and respect.

"I did not enter this campaign because I wanted your money nor because I wanted to outwit you," Harrison continued. "When Mr. Douglass first asked me to participate, I answered that I would not; but later I saw your picture in a newspaper he had, and recognized in you a man who had done a great wrong to one who was very dear to me. I had never seen you, but I had seen another picture of you, carried by a deceived and broken-hearted woman to her grave. It occurred to me that I could in some measure right the wrong, and incidentally keep the promise made many years ago. My proportion of the gain in this deal I shall turn over to the girl whose mother you robbed and deceived. As for the promise, I will keep it now. I had intended to seek you out at your home, but when I heard that you were to meet Mr. Douglass tonight, I decided that it was as well here as at another time and place."

He stepped to the door, and returned leading Mary by the hand. The close-fitting tailored gown she wore made her appear taller and slighter, and her face was very pale. She did not tremble, but held Harrison's hand tightly.

Douglass, watching Bruce narrowly, saw his face turn white, then ghastly gray, and his hands clutched convulsively at the arms of his chair. His lips moved a little, and although no sound was audible, it was plain that they formed the one word "Mary." Harrison's quiet voice broke the silence.

"This is your daughter," he said; "she looks very like her mother."

Bruce made no answer, he looked only at Mary, and his face seemed very, very old.

"After you had secured her mother's fortune, and trumped up your divorce," Harrison continued, "she returned to her home, penniless, broken in mind and body. I sought her out and she begged me to take her away from the world; she imagined you were always pursuing her. I married her to protect her name,—I was to have married her before you took her from me, by what devil's art I do not know,—and took her to a quiet island in the woods. A few months later Mary was born, and in another month she was motherless. I promised my wife before she died that I would bring you face to face with her child. I have kept that promise, and I have restored the fortune which was hers by right, and my business here is ended."

He turned to the door, but Bruce put out one trembling, bloodless hand and stayed them. Then he wet his dry lips with his tongue, and said hoarsely:

"I would like to tell the child that I am sorry, that I tried to find her mother and make reparation. I am an old man, and the world looks different to me now from what it did then. I cannot ask her to forgive me, but I would like her to know that I am sorry, and that I have suffered for my act."

"You have my forgiveness," she answered in a low voice. "I wish I could couple with it some loving thought, but I can only think of you as a strange man who wronged my mother. My own father stands here beside me."

Turning to Harrison, she begged him to take her away, and they left Bruce sitting there surrounded by his books and figures, and went upon the street. There she turned again to her father, yes, her own father, and said to him in a subdued voice:

"Please take me home, away from it all. I am very unhappy."

* * * * *

When the sun rose red over Lake Michigan on Sunday morning, and with his earliest rays lighted up the great, grey edifice at the foot of La Salle Street, and bathed those blood-soaked stones with light, the man of schemes and dollars was still sitting where they left him, and the pitiless fingers of remorse and hopeless yearning had drawn heavy lines upon his stony, aged face.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MESSENGER.

Two months had passed; to Douglass they had been wearying and irksome. He had thought when he left Nobody's Island that his absence from the old scenes would lend some new interest to his return, but he was mistaken. Something of new self-respect and pride had grown up in his heart, and he found that the fountains of pleasure were not only as uninteresting and monotonous as of old, but that he looked upon them now with contempt and disgust.

It was true even of the whiskey. He had assured himself that he would gradually drift into his old habits, and for a time he saw the confirmation of this view in an increase of the use of liquor. But later, when he arose with that heavy lifeless feeling he knew so well, and turned to the decanter for relief, a fierce feeling of shame came over him,—shame that he could be so weak and cowardly, and with that shame a keen remembrance of the happy days on Nobody's Island, and above all, a still small voice that bade him be more worthy of her even if she was lost to him forever.

He was better for his sorrow. He had always been a tolerant man, tolerant of others' faults as well as his own,—and now bitterness and harsh judgment of other men was almost absent from his heart. His defeat of Bruce had been a keen satisfaction to him at the time, but sometimes as he thought of the gray-haired man with that cup of wormwood always at his lips, he felt a little pity even for him.

He thought often of that triumphant day, but not of the victory he had gained over Bruce. His fortune had come back to him, his revenge had been glutted, but she had passed from his sight that same day, left him with but a brief adieu, never to gladden his eyes again, never any more. The victory of money and revenge was in one scale, Mary in the other, and for the satisfaction of that day, the balance swung heavily against him.

But he was not a man to cry over spilt milk, nor to indulge in sickening self-pity. He went upon his way calmly as of yore, a little quieter, a little more thoughtful, and a great deal better.

To amuse himself and defeat his great enemy, time, was now his chief pursuit. The taste of freedom and health he had had in the woods led him to project some new trip of the kind, and with this in view he went to Matthews' office one day.

"Billy," he said, "I've never been able to settle with you for your part in that deal of mine,—you won't take anything,—so I've figured out a plan."

"You know why I did it, Doug," Matthews replied, "I wouldn't have done the thing for many men, and by the great horn spoon I wouldn't do it again, even for you. Too much money, too much money. You fellows see so much money in that game of yours that you lose all conception of its value. I didn't sleep for a week. But it was a beautiful deal all right."

"Yes, it turned out all right. But to get back to my plan. You've been drilling here for a year now without a vacation, and I want you to plan a trip for us to take somewhere together, and let me foot the bills. I'm asking it as much for my sake as for yours. You got me started at this thing, and you've got to help me out."

Matthews considered for a time, then his face brightened.

"There's one trip I always did want to take, but it's a long one, and the expense isn't so great as the loss of time. I'll think the matter over and let you know."

"You're going to let me know right now." Then laying his hand on Matthews' knee, Douglass continued earnestly:

"See here, Billy, I've got money, a lot of it, and it's not much good to me,—no good at all if I can't give some of it to my friends,—what few I have,—and besides, I owe you something for your part in that deal. I want you to figure what your business is paying here,—what it would pay while you're gone, and let me settle the score. You know the spirit in which I make the offer, and as sure as my name's Douglass, I'll walk out of this office and cut you dead if you don't let me do it. It's a pleasure to me, and it's your due."

Matthews laughed at his friend's earnestness. "Well, I suppose I'll have to say yes," he replied. "Perhaps when you hear me describe the trip you won't be so keen for it."

"I'm game. Where will we go?"

"The trip I have in mind is up in Montana, so we can't go till next Spring. We will make a boat up there and put it into the Missouri River. The stream is swift and deep. We would have to carry the boat around the rapids at Great Falls, but after that we can go on as long as we please. It would be a grand trip, fine scenery and shooting all the way."

"By George, that's a dandy scheme," Dougless said enthusiastically. "We can begin right now to plan and make our purchases. We'll

do it all ourselves, every lick of it. We won't need a guide,—can't get lost on a river. How far down can we come?"

"Why, just as far as we like. We can leave the boat somewhere up in Dakota, or we can come clear to St. Louis."

"That's the ticket, we'll come to St. Louis. Got a map?"

Matthews took a map from his desk. It was marked and crossed with red ink, showing that he had often figured out the voyage in his leisure moments.

"I've been on this trip about a hundred times in my mind," Matthews said; "that's the next best thing to going in reality. Here's Townsend," he continued, "that's where we'll build our boat."

For several hours the two men sat planning and figuring like two enthusiastic school boys. One would suggest something, and that would remind the other of something else. And so, they passed a happy afternoon in the pleasures of planning and anticipation.

Douglass returned to his apartments more contented than he had been for a long time. He was going to be busy. Even if the trip was a long way off, he could get some relief in planning for it with Matthews. His thoughts turned to his cabin up there in the woods, and he reflected with a sigh that if things were dif-

ferent, Matthews would enjoy a visit there as much as he would the projected trip. Nothing would ever quite equal that experience.

His servant interrupted his reverie by bringing in his letters. Douglass glanced at the superscriptions,—he knew them all. One from Mrs. Calvert, who was forever trying to save his soul, and one from Mrs. Jordan, who wasn't; a begging letter or two, and half a dozen notes from people who probably wanted tips on the market. He threw them all aside unopened, and turned inquiringly to his man, who was still standing before him.

"There's a man down in the office wants to see you. He has been here twice. I don't think you'll care to see him, but he would wait. I asked him for his card and he said he didn't have one."

"What sort of a looking man?" Douglass asked indifferently.

"Well, he looks to me like some kind of a foreigner. When I asked him for his card, he said to just tell you it was George."

Douglass sprang to his feet and rushed down to the office. There sat George, very ill at ease under the scrutiny of the clerk and the important bell-boys. Douglass strode up to him with a hearty greeting and wrung his hand joyfully.

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming," he cried, "so I could meet you. Come right up to my rooms."

"I'm not much on letter-writing," George said as they made their way to Douglass' apartments. "You know when you paid me off and left, I promised to come and see you. I never was in a big city before, and I had a time finding your place."

"Well, you're here now, and you're going to see all you want to. You're looking fine."

"Thank you, sir. You don't look as well as you did up in the woods," replied George with admirable candor.

"Oh, I'm all right. Sit down, sit down, and tell me all the news."

George looked at the chairs suspiciously; such things were not of his world. He chose the least elaborate, and seated himself gingerly upon its edge. He was dressed in a new black suit, and it sat illy upon his fine muscular body. He had also purchased a massive gold watch chain, and as he talked, he fumbled it uneasily.

"Well, there ain't much news to tell." Then he brightened up: "Oh, yes, a bear climbed in through the window of the cabin and busted open the cupboard, and messed things up pretty bad. I was over to Harrison's at the time and didn't get him."

Douglass received this important news with a shout of laughter. A moment later it struck him that he had not laughed that way since he left the woods. George laughed with him, and sat back farther in his chair, a little more at ease.

"That friend of yours asked me for my card," George continued, "and I guess he was kind o' mad because I didn't have any. He's the first man I ever saw that I was afraid of—s'pose he's all right when you know him."

Douglass repressed another laugh, and set about making George feel at home. It occurred to him that everything here impressed the halfbreed with much the same strange novelty as the scene of the woodland had first impressed him. George was as much a greenhorn as *he* had been in the woods, and with a quick remembrance of how patient and pleasant the boy had been, he determined to repay him in kind. So he asked him what most interested him in the city, what he wanted to see, and where he wanted to go.

"Well, I've seen about enough for one day," George answered. "I'd like to see a theater, though."

"You're going to see them all," Douglass said heartily. "We'll start going tonight. Which way did you come out?"

"Same way I took you in; stopped at Kaufman's one day and night. He said to give you his regards."

"How are they all at Harrison's?"

"About the same. Mr. Harrison is building an ice-house. He wants everything that's going. Miss Mary don't seem quite as gay as she used to."

"She hasn't been ill, has she?" Douglass asked quickly.

"Oh no, not to say sick, but she acts older, and don't skip around quite as much as she used to."

Douglass remained silent; his thoughts were far away.

George shifted uneasily in his chair, considered for a moment, watching his companion's face, cleared his throat and said:

"She's been different ever since you was shot. Sometimes I think it's on account of some things you said to her when you were out of your head."

Douglass sprang to his feet, crossed the room in two steps, and caught George by the shoulders.

"What did I say to her?" he asked in a tense voice.

George was not astonished nor appalled by the action. He looked straight in the other's eyes and answered:

“You told her you loved her, and she told you the same. And you went right ahead talking, and she said some things to you. She told you she didn’t care anything about your being older, and some other things. That’s what I heard, and I left the room. You spoke naturally enough, and we didn’t either one of us know you was out of your head. And when she saw how it was, she made me promise not to tell,—but I’ve broke my word.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HOME TRAIL.

Along the trail that leads from Wild-Cat Lake to Harrison's, a man was toiling. The trail was a bad one, and the canoe upon his head was heavy. Now and then he stumbled to his knees, or was thrown sharply back by a heavy overhanging branch, but he took up his way good-naturedly. Once when a root tripped him, and he stretched his length upon the ground he cursed softly as he arose, but there was no wrath in the malediction, and he laughed in almost the same breath. He did not sing as he strode along, he needed all his breath for his labor, but his heart was singing, and it was a good song, well sung, a song that his impoverished youth had never known, the song of a bird that flies to meet its mate.

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It was evening when he came softly to the door of the cabin,—so softly that she did not hear him. She was sitting by the great table reading, and the subdued light of the lamp shed a lustre on her hair, and a glory on her face. He stepped inside, and she looked up quietly. Then her face grew white, and she rose slowly

and came a step or two toward him, searching his face with wide, unbelieving eyes. Something she saw there, and something in the motion of his empty arms, changed the pallor of her cheeks to a rosy, glorious red, and in another instant her head was on his breast.

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When the night had fallen, the King of Nobody's Island and his Queen to be, walked hand in hand upon the quiet beach. The King thought of many things; of the struggling mob he had left behind him, of the lost years of striving, fighting, chasing those will-o-the-wisps of gain and pleasure; and lastly, with a thankful heart, of the one of all the world who had given herself into his keeping, and he vowed that he would guard his treasure carefully, honorably, nobly, as befitted a King.

And the Queen,—it is not given to us to know what she thought, for the depths of a woman's heart and love, limitless, fathomless,—no man has ever sounded. She only asked the old questions that women always ask of the men they love; but in her eyes, lately so sorrowful, a great light was shining, a light that was reflected from the eyes of her King.

And if you want to know what the things were which she asked him, or what brought the light into her eyes, you must find Kings or

Queens of your very own, and hear from their lips the words that men and maids said to each other in the earliest days of creation, and which they will be saying to each other long after you and I are dust.

[THE END]

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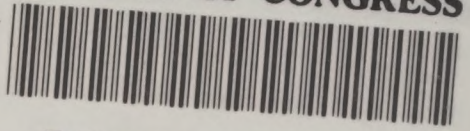
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